

Flux - A Strategy Guide for OCD

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Flux - Introduction

I have found that the people who understand anxiety the best are those who have the most anxiety. And this sort of fellowship can be an effective therapeutic tool. Anxiety is far less demoralizing when you find that there are others out there who share similar frustrations and intrusive thoughts. When you hear your very thoughts spoken out loud by others it can have a powerful effect on your life. Anxiety does not have to lead to dark solitude.

Those of us with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder can consider ourselves blessed in many ways. We all have an innate talent for organizing and processing information. Often we think several steps ahead of others and need to slow down for them! The anxiety gives us energy, a great deal of energy. However, we often divert this energy inward instead of outward and as a result we become 'tenants of our own misery.'

I chose the title 'Flux' for this book because the word represents an ongoing stream or steady flow. The pre-Socratic philosopher Heraclitus (540- 480 B.C.) famously proclaimed that the world is in a constant state of flux and therefore it is impossible to achieve true knowledge of it. He is known for saying "You cannot step in the same river twice."

Interestingly, this illustrates what we all have in common. Because those of us with OCD are often caught up in our heads, we spend more time monitoring ourselves than actually being ourselves! The natural rhythm of life has become lost somewhere in our distorted filters and self-doubts. In a desperate attempt to salvage what little spontaneity is left, we often rehash the sequence of important events, over and over again. However, the truth (and the certainty it produces) is always changing - and the more we try to capture it, the more it simply eludes us. Moreover, during these

long ruminations and mental compulsions, others may notice long periods of silence and even feel disconnected with us. Which only serves to isolate us even further.

Unfortunately, life does not stop and wait for us to ruminate and obsess, it keeps moving and changing. We sometimes find ourselves playing catch-up, and the rippling effect takes over - leaving us more and more stifled with each step that we fall behind. We become prisoners of our minds rapidly cycling between past, present, and future events until the darkness finally overwhelms us! So what in the world are we going to do? Where do we even begin? How do we get back into flux with our environment? How do we re-integrate ourselves in a way that will allow us to feel and connect with others?

The first basic assumption that people have, most of whom do not actually have OCD, is that compulsive urges can simply be turned on and off at will as if there is a switch somewhere in the brain that we can just flip and something magical will happen.

Time and time again I have had to listen to people conjecture that the solution to OCD is to simply ignore the compulsive urges. This line of reasoning suggests that if I do not carry out the compulsion I will inevitably come face to face with the fear and anxiety that has prompted it. Supposedly, I can then get to the root of my problems and snip it with a pair of clippers like it is an overgrown weed growing up the side of a house.

However, it is not simple and sometimes not even possible for us to ignore a compulsive urge. This poses a serious problem because as I mentioned before life does not wait for us to ruminate ourselves to a undeniable certainty. Sometimes we have to pay attention to what we are doing. Ruminating is simply not an option.

In order to describe the importance of this point let us consider a possible situation in which 'paying attention' is not only a good idea, it is a matter of life or death.

When I was in basic training there were several times I had compulsive urges while in the middle of combat training. I would

fiercely resist, and I would have to do it often. However, it was the resistance itself which gave me the most trouble. The more I would try to ignore my compulsive urges, the lengthier my thoughts would become. Until finally, this self-dialogue itself became my biggest problem. It was a battle I was not equipped to win.

There was one day in particular when my platoon was being trained on how to safely throw grenades. In other words, how to throw grenades without killing myself and others in the process. But I never heard any of their instructions that day. Because I was consumed with trying to ignore my obsessions. Many of us have certain duties and responsibilities that require our undivided attention. We need cognitive strategies that will work, quickly, and under pressure; strategies that will allow us to set aside our heavy moral reasoning until a more appropriate time.

This book is a collection of all the material I have found useful throughout the years, in one way or another. It is simply a strategy guide that you can use as a model for developing your own (things that will be more tailored to your individual struggle). Therapy is expensive, especially if you don't have medical insurance, and we need more than the 'just ignore it' solution to get by everyday.

So let's get started.

Chapter 1 - Anxiety

There are many ways of defining anxiety. Indeed, its definition has grown into an art-form. Nonetheless, one of the points I want to drive home to you, again and again, is that sooner or later you are going to have to pick a definition to use, and then put it to the test. Gradually, you can modify your ideas, but you have to start somewhere.

In a composition class I had in college, someone would inevitably say at the start of every essay, "I don't know what to write." To whom my professor would inevitably respond, "Just get something on paper. The rest will take care of itself" And you know what, he was right, every time.

I once read an article about Stephen King, in which he makes an analogy about this. To paraphrase King, he said that it is like walking in the desert and stubbing his toe on a chimney. He begins to explore what is lying beneath the sand. As he continues to dig he uncovers several different sections of a house, each leading to another section, until finally, he has dug up an entire mansion. The point is, you are not going to what you want to describe and explore further until you get started. So let's take that first step. For now, you can borrow my experiences if you wish. The point is, whatever works for you.

I have always known that my anxiety gives me a great deal of energy. For many years I sought to make the most of this energy by rigidly structuring my time. After all, there are a lot of things I would like to see and do before I die: I would like to have children, travel through Europe, buy a boat and go on fishing trips, etc.

With the onset of my OCD - and the resulting discharge from the Army - these desires became further out of reach. Likewise, my anxiety increased in proportion to this. I began to go about my day in a frenzy - running here, running there - until my attempts at multi-tasking became almost as unbearable as my anxiety. I

frequently grew impatient with others and developed a nasty road rage. When my desire to achieve and improve was not instantly gratified, I would respond by directing my fury **inward (retroflection)**, or **towards other people (reaction-formation, projection)**. Even the slightest detour from my road to success could not be tolerated. All the while, I was unconscious of how I was **micro-managing** my time. I became extremely selfish, and this only served to isolate me further from my family and friends, and the things that meant the most to me.

Rollo May

Rollo May, the existential psychologist, believed that anxiety is associated with creativity and is not necessarily a bad thing to have. He understood that we must take advantage of the freedom we have to harness this energy. In particular, he said that man is the only creature that is conscious of the fact that he will someday die, and out of this comes **normal anxiety**.

May believed, along with the other existentialists, that the most important fact about humans is that they are free. As we have seen, however, freedom does not produce a tranquil life. Freedom carries with it responsibility, uncertainty, and therefore anxiety....**Neurotic anxiety** is not conducive to personal growth because it results from the fear of freedom.

One of the things that I like about May's perspective is that it not only nicely defines what anxiety is, it also provides a constructive solution. "Freedom is the mother of all anxiety," he said. "We're aware that what we do matters, and that we only have about seventy or ninety years in which to do it, so why not do it and get joy out of it."

May's idea was originally proposed by Martin Heidegger.

It was very important to Heidegger that humans can ponder the finiteness of their existence. For Heidegger, a prerequisite for living an authentic life is coming to grips with the fact that "I must someday die." With that realization dealt with, the person could get busy and exercise his or her freedom to create a meaningful existence, an existence that allows for almost constant personal growth, or **becoming**.

Here is the definition of Existentialism.

Ironically, when we try to avoid anxiety by getting rich, or living the fast life, we miss out on a vast resource of creativity. Karen Horney referred to any such diversion as "**Shallow Living**."

This is a kind of living that lacks depth and intensity; lacks direction, autonomy, and real meaning....we can say that feelings in such people are very **shallow**. Words of praise or warmth appear easily with little meaning or no marked sincerity....Their interests are directed almost entirely to external values, such as money, entertainment, or gossip....They show failure to form judgments of their own and are influenced more by current opinion or by what others will think of them.

Horney felt that shallow living was a neurotic resignation. It is a trap that we can easily fall into whether we **consciously** choose to accept our anxiety or not.

For many years I wanted to pretend to myself that I did not have OCD. I wanted to believe that I was the same as everyone else (or normal, whatever that is supposed to be). Subsequently, I was willing to do whatever it took - to create the illusion that I was the average confident, competent person. In spite of this bold attempt at self-assurance, I was inadvertently refusing to accept the truth about my condition. Thus, the authenticity needed for real change was not present. Rather, my OCD still seemed like an

unnecessary limitation - a minimal annoyance that could be quickly disposed of.

Clearly, when I first set out to accept responsibility for my anxiety, I became more of a prisoner than an artistic masterpiece. I began to monitor how I was coming across all the time. Every word I said and every action I took was plagued with doubt and uncertainty, no matter how much I tried to cover-up this insecurity.

Because of this denial I was living a shallow life that frequently included drugs and alcohol and whatever else I could get my hands on. In the end, it was this behavior in-itself that was my real disability.

Master morality, as the name suggests, is the morality of the powerful and strong willed....Slave morality, on the other hand, is a morality common to those people who are weak willed, uncertain of themselves, oppressed, and abused. The essence of slave morality is utility. The good is what is most useful for the community as a whole.

Friedrich Nietzsche talked about the **Übermensch** or the **Overman**, as being a person that creates himself as an artist creates a masterpiece. This person can be defined broadly, as anyone willing to explore their own values through trial and error. Nietzsche believed that we must become our own source of validation; rather than constantly seeking the approval of others. We must forge ourselves from the fire and steel of courage. In order to do this, we must allow ourselves to grow, in spite of the ridicule we receive from others during this process. Furthermore, he considered the herd mentality to be weak and often indicative of the lack of such determination.

The noble type of man experiences **itself** as determining values; it does not need approval; it judges, "what is harmful to me is what is harmful in itself"; it knows itself to be that which first accords honor to things; it is value-creating
- Friedrich Nietzsche

The truth is that we cannot please everyone in life. Sooner or later we have to develop our own value system and face the pain that comes from the errors inherent in it. The first step in understanding and using our anxiety constructively is to give up the inflated responsibility of making everyone happy. It's not going to happen, ever. People may laugh and snicker and call you 'what they will' when you fail to react to them as specifically as they want you to. You might even feel guilty that they are disappointed in you.

Because of this nervousness that is triggered in you, you may begin to ruminate, obsess, or engage in overt or mental compulsions. Consequently, you might not notice that your boss is talking to you from across the room. Maybe you don't hear everything he is saying or the instructions that he is giving you. Only, now he is out the door - oops!

Later, when he comes back, he comments that you did not complete the task that he assigned you. He raises his voice...calls you stupid. This kind of stuff can cripple you if you let it. But only if you let it. Later, in this book I am going to discuss ways in which you can hold people responsible for this kind of behavior; and yet improve these relationships at the same time.

The last time I checked, nobody was perfect. Everybody has an Achilles heel and some people are just determined to make you find it; sometimes you have to. But don't ever let anyone talk down to you! Everyone has their scars, their secrets, their skeletons, etc. OCD is as crippling as we allow it to be. These days I have no problem telling people I have OCD. And I have no

problem meeting as many people as I can, who have it as well. I am much happier as a result.

George Kelly

Since the existentialists are our architects, we are going to need George Kelly to be our construction site foreman. Kelly composed a comprehensive theory of cognition. He believed we all construct our cognitions in the ways that we familiarize and contrast ourselves with the world. Hence, we can be more flexible in our understanding of cognitions once we realize what these generalizations are. There is an entire constructivist psychology stemming from his work including 'The Journal of **Constructivist Psychology**', which is specifically devoted to the theory. However, we need only look at his interpretation of anxiety and briefly relate it to his notion of **constructs**.

Whereas Freud considered wishes to be elements of the mind, Kelly proposed the idea of constructs. Constructs are a more specific way of categorizing the opposing extremes behind of our judgments and motivations. A **construct** is a way of distinguishing the difference between people and other people or an object and another object. A construct begins with at least two extreme positions (or poles) on either end of an issue. In addition, there can be three-pole constructs as. Together, all of these constructs represent a construction system.

The stand-up comedy of George Carlin can provide us with an amusing way of understanding and remembering this concept of a construct. Carlin once commented that he tends to categorize drivers in either of two categories: "Anyone driving slower than me is an idiot, and anyone driving faster than me is a maniac," he said.

I think my dad has personally adopted this construct because even twenty years after we first heard this together he still alludes to the comment, and often confesses that he feels the same way. The point is that he has a tendency to construct driving behavior

within two opposing extremes, or categories. And if a person is not one, they are the other: **idiot - maniac**.

We construct these two-pole extremes all the time in daily life yet we rarely notice it. In fact, if we meet a person that seems to embody both sides of the poles of one of our constructs we may accuse them of being a hypocrite, when in reality it may be only our subjective judgment that is skewed. I have noticed a stunning example of this in one of my own constructs about driving.

Once when I was eighteen I was pulled over on the Atlantic City expressway for driving in the passing lane while there were no cars on the road. Baffled, I listened to the officer as she reminded me that in the driver's manual the DMV specifically instructs us to use the passing lane for passing and the cruising lane for cruising. "If there is no one on the road" she said, "you don't need to be in the passing lane do you?"

Well, sometimes I wish this had never happened to me because I basically agreed with the officer, and for a long time afterwards I harbored a strong dislike for anyone that I felt was "cruising" in the passing lane. I would get especially angry at those people who I felt who were impeding the flow of traffic by not letting those of us pass who wanted to. My driving construct for many years was **passing vs. not passing**. And my behavior was congruent with this belief. I always made sure to move out of the way of other drivers who had a greater sense of urgency than me; because this was the way I had constructed reality. Moreover, I felt this constructed reality had been validated and so it remained unchallenged, for a long time. After all, I got it straight from a police officer!

Interestingly, my stepfather has a driving construct that is quite different from mine. He points out that the driving manual states that there is to be no passing on right, regardless as to whether he is passing someone in the passing lane or not. He has developed a construct that is congruent with this belief; and he respects the rights of others in the same regard. He will not pass people on the right, etc.

After thinking about this and remembering certain conversations that I've had with people throughout the years, I began to realize that my stepfather had an interesting point; and it seemed to explain the gap in my understanding as to why some people clog up the passing lane. In fact, I realized that most likely our opposing arguments were representative of two of the major arguments that people have about driving! Of course, some people just don't care either way, and perhaps they don't pay attention whatsoever.

Hence, I now have a new, modified (three-pole) construct: **There are some people who believe the passing lane is only for passing - there are those who believe you should not pass on the right even if you aren't passing - and those who really don't care or pay attention to either of these things.**

The funny thing is that I get less angry on the road now. I have more respect for other drivers. I am less willing to risk an accident in order to teach someone a tail-gating lesson about the passing lane! And I am less likely to race by somebody on the right in order to get in front of them. Of course, this whole matter may just be an indication that there is a flaw in the driver's manual. Or more importantly, it could be an indication that my construction system was not working for me. The point is: this new construct works, at least for now. It has helped me to have more of an open mind as to the motivations of others - and even more importantly - it keeps me out of trouble.

This kind of neatly sums up not only Kelly's idea of the poles of constructs, but also his definition of anxiety as well. For Kelly, anxiety is created when your construction system does not adequately depict reality for you, and as a result you don't respond well to it. Suddenly, you may find yourself in a situation where your construction system does not provide an appropriate course of action for you. As a result, your anxiety flares up and you may turn inwards by withdrawing into a more stereotyped, constricted type-of-compliance.

Chapter 2 - The Cognitive Maze

The Cognitive Map

Imagine moving somewhere that you have never been before. Now imagine, that your job requires you to take several different routes to work at times because of frequent traffic jams and car accidents. Your first payday arrives, and you find out that your job prints pay checks that must be cashed in person at a bank located outside of town. It's Friday and you really want that money! You have driven through that part of town twice before, but you were tired, and busy running many errands, so your memory is a little fuzzy. But you have that check in your hand and you are ready to put your memory to the test.

In your mind, you replay the events that took place during the first two trips you made to this part of town and begin to remember several landmarks along the way. First, you remember that you made a right at a McDonalds because it had a really big play area in front, and there were many kids running and jumping around. Second, you remember that you made that first left after crossing the gray stone bridge. You specifically remember this because of a kid that scared you half to death - by darting out onto the road in front of you on his bike - in order to race across the street before you could complete your turn.

Edward Tolman, once did a study based on a very similar proposal of memory. He put rats in a T-maze and observed how well they remembered their way around by first letting them navigate themselves out without giving them any specific motivation to do this. After days of trial runs he rewarded the rats with food when they completed the maze.

As an example, when an animal is first placed in the start box of a T-maze, the experience is entirely new, and therefore the animal can use no information from prior experience. As the animal runs the maze, it sometimes turns right at the choice point and sometimes left. [...] If the earlier hypothesis "If I turn left, I will find food" is confirmed, the animal will develop the expectancy "When I turn left, I will find food." If the expectancy is consistently confirmed, the animal will develop the belief "Every time I turn left in this situation, I will find food." Through this process, a cognitive map of this situation develops—an awareness of all possibilities in a situation.

Basically, Tolman noticed that the rats made fewer errors on days they were rewarded as opposed to the days they were not rewarded. Therefore, he concluded that the rats must have used a "cognitive map" that they had developed previously, during the trial runs (the times they had not received a reward). He felt that the rats used this cognitive map as a reference to run the maze in a shorter time, in order to receive as many rewards as possible. Hence, the idea of the cognitive map.

The initial learning that occurred during the no reward trials was what Tolman referred to as **latent learning**. He argued that humans engage in this type of learning everyday as we drive or walk the same route daily and learn the locations of various buildings and objects. Only when we need to find a building or object does learning become obvious. Controversy developed from Tolman's theory of latent learning, but several investigators demonstrated that rats do learn in the absence of rewards.

The map is not the territory

Alfred Korzybski is the Polish-American scientist and philosopher who remarked, "The map is not the territory." Basically what Korzybski meant is that neither an abstraction derived from something, or a reaction to it, is the thing itself. You can drop a brick on your foot and feel pain from the brick, but this pain doesn't necessarily tell you what the brick is made of. You cannot derive what the internal structure of the brick is based on the pain that you feel.

Furthermore, we most accurately categorize and process information when it is interesting or threatening enough to be a real concern. I may develop a basic mental representation of Orlando but it is not Orlando, itself. It is as filtered and distorted as my attention span allows it to be - and only the stimulus that was unique enough to stand out actually registered.

In the previous section I gave an example of how we might construe a cognitive map (mental representation) based on past events, as Tolman suggested. The kid speeding across the street on his bike represented an immediate danger and as a result, it became a landmark, which may turn out to be accurate the next time we pass through this area. Conversely, the McDonald's landmark may be largely inaccurate. You may not notice this until you are at one of three intersections with a McDonalds (all of them with play areas in front). There are too many McDonald's restaurants with play areas! Therefore, doing what you did before may not help you. In fact, you may end up going out of your way and getting completely lost. The map was not the territory!

Some parts of our maps may indeed, be accurate at times. But the point is that we have to take into account the distortions that come about from our misconceptions and limited accuracy.

Gregory Bateson, in "Form, Substance and Difference," from *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (1972) explained this well.

We say the map is different from the territory. But what is the territory? Operationally, somebody went out with a retina or a measuring stick and made a representation which were then put on paper. What is on the proper map is a representation of what was in the retinal representation of the man who made the map: as you push the question back, what you find is an infinite regress, an infinite series of maps. The territory never gets in all. [...] Always, the process of representation will filter it out so that the mental world is only maps, ad infinitum.

Practicing imperfection

Tolman's idea of the cognitive map is an insightful one. Clearly, we do form cognitive maps and use them as the basis for much of our reality. Indeed, this is a part of human living that we couldn't shake even if we wanted to. Whether we are attempting to navigate ourselves through an actual territory as in the example of the 'check run,' or we are making decisions about our personal relationships, we owe it to ourselves to have a brutally honest - consistently revised map - at our disposal. But what we do not want to do is kid ourselves into thinking that we can obsess our way into a perfect accuracy.

This process of active clinging to an outmoded view of reality is the basis for much mental illness. There are probably as many subtle variations of the definition of transference as there are psychiatrists. My own definition is: **Transference** is that set of ways of perceiving and responding to the world which is developed in childhood and which is usually entirely appropriate to the childhood environment (indeed, often life-saving) but which is inappropriately transferred into the adult environment. I mentioned that during the process of giving up my desire to always win I was depressed. This is because the feeling associated with giving up something loved - or at least something that is part of ourselves and familiar - is depression
- Scott Peck

We will never be absolutely certain about whether or not our maps are accurate, and that of course, is the whole point! There is **always** something we can do to improve our maps (and as Peck says, it is important to realize this), but as those of us with OCD know, the timing must be appropriate.

The immediacy of life may require us to **suspend** the need for certainty. It is indeed, a **paradox**. On the one hand, we desperately want to make - on the spot - revisions of our maps because this correction may be vital to understanding not only the **present** situation, but a situation that may immediately follow. But if our outward focus suffers because we are trying to make on-the-spot-revisions, many new problems may develop as a consequence.

One of the things that I have had to do in order to spend five-hours-less a day in compulsive activity, was give up the need for **perfection (certainty)**, about whether or not the door is locked, or the oven is off, am I making the right decision, interacting with people correctly, etc). I had give up what had become a radical

and deep desire to be completely certain about everything I ever did or wanted to do. Certainty is not always possible - as Korzybski's proposal that 'the map is not the territory,' so eloquently illustrates.

When the compulsive behavior is carried out in the required manner, the patient normally feels relieved; the discomfort caused by the obsession....is eliminated or reduced.... (**but**)....there are instances, admittedly few in number, where carrying out the compulsive behavior does not lead to discomfort reduction. Indeed, in a small number of cases the discomfort may even increase. Moreover, even when the compulsive behavior reduces the anxiety or discomfort, the person may be left feeling frustrated and demoralized.

Certainty has been my security blanket for a long time. Using a mental-compulsion to resolve whatever doubt I am feeling about something at the moment may or may not relieve my anxiety, but the point is there is a much bigger picture to consider. If I am talking to my boss and he is explaining how he wants me to carry out a specific task, but I am caught up in my head reflecting on something, I am going to fail miserably at what I am attempting to do (even if he doesn't notice that I was faking the funk). This may cause me to feel de-moralized and embarrassed. Because I know that once again, I let my urge to become mentally compulsive take over. Eventually, what I realized is: I am damned if I do and damned if I don't.

If I am able to refrain from carrying the mental compulsion **I can then regain piece of mind as I continue** to engage in what I am doing. The truth is that something else is likely to rear its ugly head, only a minute later anyway.

Many obsessive-compulsive patients resort to reassurance seeking, usually from members of their families. Often, obsessional thoughts such as "Will I go insane?", 'Did I do it properly?', and 'Do I need to check the taps again?', lead to the patient asking for reassurance. When reassurance is received, the patient feels some relief from his discomfort. Reassurance seeking is often done repeatedly, much to the exasperation of friends and family. At best, the provision of such reassurance provides only brief relief. - De Silva and Rachman

In my efforts to be more in-tune with the world around me I have discovered that the whole is greater than the sum of the little uncertain parts. I remember many times in the past when I was not as successful at shifting-out-of-my-modes-of-uncertainty. My compulsions were stifling because of my inability to focus on what I was doing. Interestingly, I rarely remember what triggered my confusion in the first place. What I remember is how poorly I had dealt with it.

In his book, "Science and Sanity" (1933) Korzybski describes his concept of 'time binding'.

In science we search for structure; so any structurally new term is useful, because, when tested, it always gives structural information, whether positive or negative.... In dealing with ourselves and the world around us, we must take into account the structural fact that everything in this world is strictly interrelated with everything else, and so we must make efforts to discard primitive....terms, which imply....a non-existing isolation....In creative work, semantic limitations hamper a clear understanding, and prevent scientists from inventing or formulating better, simpler, and more effective theories of different structure.

- Alfred Korzybski

Grammatical meanings change throughout the years, and the truth about ourselves and the world changes along with them. Time changes the meanings and contexts of words. What is true now, might not be true - even five minutes from now.

As Korzybski points out: after a while, it's not even about the territory anymore. Map making can become a map-making compulsion - maps of maps of maps, etc. There is no end to this.

We are all imperfect, we will always be imperfect, and there is not a thing that we can ever do about it. At some point, we have to **practice imperfection**, if we want to function at all.

I once had a doctor tell me that I was crazy for wanting to write this book. "You are not a doctor and you are not a writer," he said. For years, I had told myself this also, but not anymore. And that is because whether I have a PhD or not, I will still never be perfect.

I am not claiming to be a scientist, a doctor, or even Ernest Hemingway. I have put together a strategy guide of ideas; things that have worked for with me. This book may not contain as 'perfect' an analysis, as the good doctor claims he has - that he wants to charge me weekly for - but it is a **starting point**, nonetheless. I may **never** (in some people's eyes) have a complete enough map of reality to write this book. And indeed, I could have vowed to not publish this book until I became a doctor, and as a result I would have spent my life stewing and feeling sorry for myself.

The truth is that any attempt to hold on to the **ideal** of absolute perfection (PhD or not), is nothing but a **detour in oblivion**; because we all suffer from uncertainty.

I once had a class at the Richard Stockton College of NJ called **Science and Pseudoscience**. We each had to give a presentation on a 'pseudo-scientific' topic and debunk it. Some of the topics that were offered were: horoscopes, Yetti, the Lochness monster, voodoo, the moon landing, etc.

I chose horoscopes. While I was researching it, I learned to discern the difference between astronomy and astrology. Astronomy is a science, astrology is a pseudoscience. And I am about to give you an example as to why astrology is a pseudoscience.

While I was researching astrology and horoscopes, I discovered that the so-called **celestial maps** developed by the ancient Babylonians, and others - were entirely inaccurate. In fact, even if I was to grant validity to these **ancient** maps and pretend that I do indeed have a sign - relative to the day I was born - it turns out that my sign (Gemini) would not be my sign at all, but actually the sign before (Taurus). And this is because of something that takes place every year, which on March 21st is called, **The Vernal Equinox**. The Earth tilts back on its axis, very slightly - and has been for thousands of years! And they do not, and have not, updated these charts. By now, we must surely be the sign before us!

It was an interesting class. We talked about cults, the holocaust-denial, creationism vs. evolution, the Bible, Darwin, and many other topics. I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to sit in this class because it has shown me the importance of the **scientific method**. The strategies that I have developed and that I am using in this book, were all taken into account - within this **context**.

Concepts that I am going to discuss later like Neuro-Linguistic Programming, the cybernetic model of OCD, and Memetics are all things that I know are under fire from the scientific community. In fact, some of these things you simply will not find in a college text-book - perhaps because they are considered to be unscholarly. But I have attempted to look solely at the cognitive aspects of these ideas, and not the perceived pseudoscientific claims that have been presented along with them.

It is the healthy useful premise behind the ideas that I am most interested in. Some of these ideas were well thought out and have helped people to be successful in life. It is not necessary for

me to throw the baby out with the bathwater. What I want to know is how they work - **in the now**- in the face of immediacy, and whether or not they can help me put my anxiety to good use. Hopefully, my sharing of these ideas will help shed some light on your frustrations as well.

At times the scientific method can be just as assuming as any pseudo-science. What do I mean by this?

Although OCD has historically been linked to abnormal serotonin function, "The Serotonin Hypothesis of OCD is based primarily on the finding that medications effective to treating OCD" are limited to antidepressants with potent or selective effects on serotonin neurotransmission [...] **No specific test of serotonin levels can be used to diagnose OCD**. In fact, most people with OCD have **normal blood levels of serotonin**.

What am I trying to illustrate by using this reference? Consider this passage taken from the book "Automotive Service" (2004) by Tim Gilles:

It is very important to diagnose the cause of the problem before performing a repair. It is not unusual for an inexperienced technician to spend many hours of work only to discover that the repair was unnecessary [...] problems that appear to be engine related can be from **other automotive specialty areas**, such as transmission repair or emission controls. Sometimes a problem with a **system** causes an engine to fail. If the problem is not taken care of, the failure will recur.

Anybody who has ever had to fix cars for a living can tell you that in the automotive industry it is essential that you **do not** replace parts without knowing what the cause of the problem is. In other words, you don't **guess**, based on the symptoms. Time and

time again, when I was attending Universal Technical Institute in Orlando, Florida they made sure to stress this point. In fact, later, when I trained with Nissan, they were even more adamant about it. This is because if you only fix the symptom, the car may appear to be just fine at first, but sooner or later the customer will come back, because the problem wasn't actually fixed. Too many comebacks can get you fired and cause your shop a great deal of money, time, and heartache.

Yet pharmaceutical companies make their medications and psychiatrists prescribe these medicines with **exactly** this kind of '**inexperienced technician**' kind of approach.

Within the past few decades, it has been suggested by several authors that obsessive-compulsive disorder is caused by a biological disturbance...in particular, it has been claimed that obsessive compulsive disorder arises because of an inadequate supply of serotonin. **There is no evidence that people suffering from obsessive-compulsive disorder have serotonin levels that differ from people of any such disorder...**The fact that clomipramine often reduces obsessive-compulsive symptoms does not mean that the disorder was caused by a shortage of Clomipramine, or of the serotonin it bolsters.

It seems that as a culture, we have more respect for our automobiles than for own our brains! Stunning!

Perhaps pharmaceutical companies are even greedier than mechanics? That is actually, **not** what I am saying at all. Indeed, I'm sure their pockets are filled with cash, but I'm also sure that at some point scientists realized that they had to develop something and then put this **something** to the test! People are suffering and in need of some kind of relief.

So, I do respect the rights of scientists - **to guess**, just as I expect myself and everyone else that is suffering from OCD to find what **works** for them and share it with others.

In fact, I recommend that you find an OCD support group in your area. If there isn't one already, perhaps you can start one yourself. The website meetup.com can help you do this. Get out and talk with other people that have OCD. Find out what works.

The Observer Effect

Werner Heisenberg, the German theoretical Physicist introduced the idea of the **uncertainty principle**, and the resulting, **observer effect**. According to Heisenberg, the accuracy of your observations are inversely proportional to the position that you are making them from in that particular moment in time.

In other words, not only am I limited to the information that I presently have available to me, but that information changes as I observe it! This is similar to Korzybski's observation; and just as Korzybski points to the potential for 'Obsessional-map-making,' so Heisenberg can help us to understand this as well. Sometimes we inadvertently create **sub-obsessions** while observing ourselves, and as a result we sidetrack ourselves.

The German physicist Werner Karl Heisenberg found that the very act of observing an electron influences its activity and casts doubt on the validity of the observation. Heisenberg concluded that nothing can ever be known with certainty in science. Translated into psychology, this principle says that, although human behavior is indeed determined, we can never learn at least some cause of behavior because in attempting to observe them we change them...Such a position is called **indeterminism**.

Once I begin to measure what my position is, I have changed it. *If I am not really worried about this, then why do I keep thinking about it?* And so, not only has my concern become an obsession but I now have a second obsession running parallel with

the first.

The danger often lies in trying to find the quick fix, the instant certainty that we are right, and that everything is OK, so that our anxiety will be relieved.

As Rollo May has said many times throughout his career, anxiety comes from the space between where we are **now** and **where we want to be**.

If right now I work at Wendy's - but within the span of the next six months I want to be write a book, sell millions of copies, and buy a boat to sail around the Caribbean with - I am going to have a lot of anxiety. But it takes more than just realizing this to change it.

Doubt is the uncertainty of a belief or opinion. In doubting, judgment is held when facing a statement's truth or an event's reality. Chronic doubting, as in OCD, is masked by the presence of iterative questioning or double checking. At times doubting elicits the ability to make decisions. Although some clinicians use the term as a synonym for being unable to make decisions, they are not synonymous.

It is always tempting to take the gamble that I can resolve an internal conflict - by splitting my consciousness, plugging in a quick rationalization - through a mental compulsion - and stepping right back into the shoes of my present awareness. Not only is this not a good idea for reasons that I gave above, but I am taking a huge gamble by doing this. At the point that I split my consciousness, I roll the dice. I am in a sense betting on the odds that I can resolve my compulsive urge quickly enough to not miss any of the potentially important things that are presently taking place around me. I may miss information, that later may be essential to my survival. It is like putting a piece of chewing gum in the hole of a racing tires before you head out to the track.

Engaging in mental compulsive rituals while undertaking responsibilities that I need to be focused on, is always a risk. Unwittingly, I am entering a **metaphorical-like-maze**.

But lets take this metaphor one step further and imagine ourselves as rats, searching for cheese in this maze. The cheese for us, represents the feeling of certainty. We want it, we want it now, and we are determined to get it. With each probing thought of our covert compulsion we race further in and around to one adjacent corridor after another; deeper and deeper. We either arrive at this reassurance that we are after - or we get so lost (in the split between reflection and our "I" awareness) - that our anxiety and fear is now creating compulsions as fast as we are resolving them. This can have a treadmill-like effect where we are constantly trying to retrace our steps quickly to get back into the present flow of what's going on.

I call this trap of quick-fix-certainty "**the cognitive maze**." We can in a sense, become just like Tolman's rats creating little pseudo-landmarks, while we race around our minds with red flags, leaving behind a trail of peanuts.

Some of the pressure we put on ourselves, and the deep probing issues we feel we must we resolve - within the span of a minute - are sometimes, ludicrous. To illustrate just how irrational, taking the **certainty plunge** is in some circumstances, let me give one more example.

In the beginning of this book I mentioned the pre-Socratic philosopher Heroclitus and how he proclaimed that the world is in a constant state of flux and so it is impossible to achieve true knowledge of it. He is known for saying "You cannot step in the same river twice." He said this because he believed that since both, **us and the world are constantly changing**, what is true one moment is not necessarily true the next.

Parmenides of Elea came along and said wait a minute, there are some things that are unchanging. And he proceeded to present **his argument**.

Moreover, Socrates went to great lengths to endlessly question the nature of people and the world, and so did the philosophers that followed him.

Plato used the allegory of the cave, and talked about the 'forms,' of reality.

Rene Descartes famously declared, "I think, therefore I am." And used this as the main premise for reflecting on his world.

Much later, David Hume shed light on the causal connections we often take for granted got us to consider whether these conjoined - cause and effect - assumptions we made daily were even true at all.

Immanuel Kant's approach to human affairs states that thoughts organize and modify the outer world; thus, people can change both (perhaps where most OCD people get stuck). At one point, the American philosopher, William James - in response to the endless philosophizing over what we can and cannot know, suggested that we focus on the more pragmatic and useful concerns of humanity.

Later, Wittgenstein claimed that ultimately, it is our diverse individual-interpretations of grammar that get in the way of us ever knowing the true nature of reality, and that these discursive turns must be taken into account.

The argument about what we can and cannot know has gone on for centuries. The argument has not gone away, it has simply changed hands. - Ludwig Wittgenstein

This is only the tip of the iceberg. Imagine having all of the people that have ever philosophized about this sort of thing, in one room, at one time. This would be a big room, with many people in it, and the conversation would be concentrative and intense, to say the least.

Can you imagine trying to resolve all of the arguments on the true nature of reality, and how you fit within this spectrum, within

the span of a minute? It is crazy, of course!

We can not even be sure that philosophers have adequately explained it - even now - after a thousand years. Socrates once proclaimed that **the only thing he knew was that he knew nothing.**

The point is: **The more certain we wish to become** about anything, **the more likely** it is that we will thwart these efforts.

At some point, you have to be satisfied enough for the moment - with yourself, with your life, with your decisions.

Obsessional Uncertainty

I often talk with people about OCD when it is relative to a particular social circumstance. For example, I may tease someone about doing something that is kind-of obsessive-compulsive, which-in-turn may prompt a conversation on the subject. I have found that most people will half-heartedly declare themselves obsessive-compulsive in order to make this kind of light conversation. While engaged in laughter they may even gest that their husband or wife accuses them of it all the time. Most of the time, this is only a form of small talk that can be easily accounted for by behaviors that in actuality, are normal and un-intrusive to their daily lives. Nevertheless, many people do wonder at some point whether or not they are over-reacting in response to something they feel anxious about.

It raises an important question: How can we distinguish between what is normal and what is neurotic?

I knew that the first step, as always, was to get something on paper - I had to pick a starting point and see where it led me. So I started by defining **rumination**.

The definition that I found to be the most concise is the one proposed by Padmal De Silva and Stanley Rachman in their book, "Obsessive Compulsive Disorder; the facts":

A **ruminations** is a train of thought, unproductive and prolonged, on a particular topic or theme....Unlike obsessions, ruminations do not intrude into the patient's consciousness, in a well-defined form, or a clearly circumscribed content. Clinically, it appears that ruminations are mental compulsive behavior, **usually preceded by an obsession**. For example, the obsession 'Am I going mad?' may lead to the compulsive urge to think through the subject, which in turn leads to a muddled attempt at thinking about it; this is the rumination....(**Mental compulsions**)....consist of specific mental acts, such as saying something silently or visualizing something in a particular way. Ruminations are not such well-defined events; the theme or topic of a rumination is specific, but what goes into the thinking about the topics are openended and variable.

Example #1 Steve the mechanic

Let's say that your friend Steve the mechanic down at the gas station is anxious about breaking up with his girlfriend. He says he doesn't regret the decision, but confesses that he has been replaying the scene of him angrily leaving her house over and over again in his mind. One day he casually asks you, "I don't know....am I being obsessive?" What would you tell Steve?

The truth is, **only Steve** knows if he is being obsessive or not. Let's say, he considers himself to be a reasonable person who doesn't wallow about breakups with his ex-girlfriends, and it would severely stultify his self-image to find out that he is the type of guy that does. At what point, is he in danger of obsessing about it?

Sooner or later that **first** intrusive thought presents itself (**stage 1**). But maybe, that first time doesn't even seem intrusive. Rather, one evening while driving home from work, he suddenly remembers how she would wait outside his house to greet him with dinner and a movie. Furthermore, let us say that he misses the anticipation of wondering if she is going to be there when he gets home, especially after a bad day. This makes him feel uncomfortable because he never thought he would actually care either way. As a result, the scene of him leaving his girlfriend's house to stroll through his mind. And perhaps, he just shakes off the resulting feeling of anticipation and the accompanying regret that he feels and, decides put it to rest. However, the next day on his way home from work he finds himself entertaining this feeling again (**stage 2**). As a result, he squirms in his seat and begins to feel uncomfortable as it replays in his mind, and he even begins to sweat.

So what about now, in stage 2 - has the thought become intrusive yet?

This is an easy one, the answer is yes. The feeling and the thoughts associated with them have definitely become intrusive; even though it has only happened twice.

What could be the first indication that there is an intrapsychic conflict? Let's look at a brief list of possible concerns (you could come up with many of these if you wanted to).

legitimate concern - a valid concern that should be addressed.

passing concern - an invalid concern that does not need to be addressed (he can shrug it off).

an undismissable invalid concern - an invalid concern that persists despite the fact that it is not a valid issue.

To be sure what an obsession is, let's look at the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) to see what the criteria is for an obsession:

Obsessions - Recurrent, intrusive, and anxiety-provoking thoughts, impulses, or images.

According to the DSM, Steve's concern has now become an obsession.

But perhaps, he has no intentions whatsoever of resolving these intrusive feelings and thoughts during stage 2. He really wants to just shrug it off; he doesn't want to resolve anything.

What has happened then as a result of this passive response?

It has become a rumination; no decision has been made on how to deal with it. Hence, it now marks the end of stage 2. If he never decides to resolve this conflict, it will never reach stage 3. He may continue to ruminate until he either decides to apologize to his ex-girlfriend or just forgive himself. Moreover, he may decide to re-structure his reality with a compulsive ritual in order to avoid dealing with it at all.

As Rollo May pointed out, freedom carries with it responsibility. And it inevitably leads not only to a feeling of uncertainty but to a generalized state of anxiety. This anxiety only becomes neurotic when we deny ourselves the struggle involved in the growing-out-of-it process.

Reaction 1 ----> unspecific, open-ended (no resolution is decided on) = rumination

or **Reaction 2** ----> specific (impulsive) resolution = mental compulsion

or **Reaction 3** --- takes steps to resolve the conflict with his ex-girlfriend (apologize, or forgive himself by learning to

control his anger better in the future). For the most part, I like the definition of rumination that is provided by De Silva and Rachman. However, obsessions come from somewhere. They don't just appear out of thin air. Otherwise everyone could be defined as obsessing. And so I think the definition is lacking in specificity. Moreover, it is only good in hindsight and does not help me to discern where the starting point of an obsession is.

If I want to prevent obsessions from ever starting in the first place, I need to have a clear picture of the thought sequence leading up to them. In other words, if ruminations sometimes originate from obsessions, and obsessions originate from intrusive, unwanted thoughts - then where do intrusive, unwanted thoughts originate? I want to know this. After all, this is where it all begins.

At some point, as a sufferer of OCD, I want to be able to tell myself with at least some degree of clarity: *I am obsessing about this, I need to stop, this is going to distract me from my task and only make me feel worse.*

What is merely a passing concern, that can be simply shrugged off, and what is a legitimate speculation? Furthermore, what is an invalid concern, that we cannot shake but need to?

The answer lies in the question itself. Obsessions originate from a concern, whether real or imagined. Like De Silva and Rachman say, they may or may not originate from an obsession. In the example of 'Steve the mechanic' I discussed an instance in which an obsession did precede a rumination.

Example #2 The hand-washing dilemma

Let's look at a situation in which a concern is resolved with a mental compulsion.

Back when I attended Universal Technical Institute, it was imperative that I arrive to class on time. If I missed a part of the lecture I could fail the written test (or not be able to perform the hands-on task in the shop). My grade as a whole could suffer and I could cause the grades of others to suffer as well.

Let's say that one morning, before my 'street legal' class is about to begin, I use the bathroom. Afterwards, I wash and dry my hands, hold the door open for the students walking in, and take my seat for the lecture on superchargers that is about to begin. To my dismay, I realize that as I had held the door open with my left hand it had come into contact with a yucky kind of wet substance.

What was it that I had touched? What if someone had went to the bathroom and not washed their hands afterwards. What if that was urine on the door. What if it was someone's nasty sweat. Ugh, I can't go back and wash my hands right now, class is starting. I guess I will just have to wait until the first fifteen-minute break.

Interestingly enough, these open-ended, self-directed type of questions do not in-themselves constitute an obsession yet, as I remarked earlier in the example of 'Steve the mechanic.' After all, is it wrong to feel a little grossed out if you touch a wet bathroom door? Not necessarily. And this kind of situation could happen to anyone. It doesn't mean we are obsessing.

Clearly, it has only just now strolled through my mind for the **first** time. Therefore, here in **stage 1** it is merely a **concern**. So, I turn my attention to the instructor who is now beginning the first slide of his power point presentation. Only, the concern once again reappears. But as I begin to wonder once again what that wet, yucky substance might have been, I feel uneasy, and start to shift around in my seat (**stage 2**). It is **intrusive** because I do

not want to explore this concern any further. There is nothing I can do about it right now. I want to pay attention to the lecture. This concern has become an anxiety-provoking thought. And to make matters worse, it is now **recurrent**.

This is not a passing concern, and so here in **stage 2** this has now become an obsession. However, we still do not know if it will result in a rumination or a compulsion. It is still open-ended, at the moment anyway.

To be sure, lets once again look at the DSM-IV TR criteria of an obsession and see how this situation matches up:

Obsessions - Recurrent, intrusive, and anxiety-provoking thoughts, impulses, or images.

Yes, it is definitely an obsession.

But I have not decided how I want to respond to it yet. It may be seen as an interruption to 'Mr. Jones' if I get up in the beginning of his lecture. I know from various remarks that he has made in the past to others that he feels it is inappropriate for students to leave within in the first fifteen minutes. As a result, I fear that I might anger Mr. Jones and maybe even my peers as well.

Therefore, I decide to stay seated and just pay attention to the lecture until it is appropriate to use the restroom. **Whatever. Dirty hands are no big deal, time to move on with life. The lecture is more important!**

Stage 2 has now ended since no steps were taken toward a resolution. Until I decide on a resolution, every repetition of this is a rumination.

I once again turn my attention to the instructor and begin to focus in on what he is saying. But the obsession is waiting there for me, like a forgotten Aunt that I am supposed to pick up at the airport.

I want to wash my dirty hands. Hmm...yea my hands may have something disgusting on them - this thought again. Yea, there is nothing I can do about it, so I must ignore it.

And so once again, I press on as if I am behind the wheel of a car and have to manually shift my transmission (brain) out of first gear and press on down the road. **So, back to what the instructor is saying...**

A few minutes later, I feel the hand-washing issue tugging at my attention again! Once again my heart rate increases. Only now, I am overtaken with a feeling of dread.

This hand-washing issue is really bothering me. I can't seem to put it out of my mind... It's OK... it's no big deal... Why am I reacting to it like this? I can't do anything about it right now.

It is as if my obsession is a car crash - that I notice in my rear-view mirror as I pass it - and there is a person standing in the middle of the road waving his hands shouting, "Come back, help!" Only I can't stop and go back.

Meanwhile, in class, the instructor has just flipped to the third page of the power point presentation. *Ugh, I am missing this!*

To make matters worse, there is a discussion taking place between the students on the material that was just presented, on the previous slide. In fact, the person next to me asks a question on what engine component it is that increases intake air flow?

Oops, I missed that slide also. What did he say? I was thinking about the stupid hand-washing. I better keep up with this discussion.

But even now, it's too late, I have missed the answer he gave to the student next to me - that could have helped me to catch up to the current slide - because of this internal dialogue.

If only I wouldn't have touched the door. I would be able to pay attention. What if I hadn't of touched the door? I would be taking in all of this information now. Did it feel like water? Or was it a more gooey kind of substance?

Stage 3 has now begun, and it signifies the beginning of a covert compulsion. This is because I have chosen a course of action. Essentially, I have chosen to re-visualize the event in hopes of convincing myself that I hadn't touched anything disgusting. Because I feel that if I can do this, the impulse to wash my hands will go away, and the problem will be solved. Therefore, I have chosen a **mental-compulsion** to resolve it. Of course, there is no way that I am going to be able to produce this kind of clarity from re-visualizing it.

Does this happen in cases of OCD? You bet it does! What a mess we have on our hands. So where do we even begin?

Welcome to the study of psychology. Because as a sufferer of OCD you have now become your own part-time-psychologist, whether you like it or not. If you don't take personal responsibility for your anxiety (yet learn to not inflate this responsibility), **there is not a thing anyone can do to help you.**

Even though there is still a general consensus among clinicians that compulsions are physical acts, **we know** that they are not necessarily as overt as some may think. Often, we are driven to perform compulsions, **covertly**.

Covert compulsions (mental compulsions) are repetitive thoughts designed to organize events through visualizing images or rehearsing silent strings of words. In a sense, it is a mental replacement for the physical act, or the condensing of many mental interpretations within a small time-frame. The 'bathroom door dilemma' provides an example of a covert compulsion.

In the movie, 'Two for the Money,' there is a scene where Al Pacino begins to verbalize the suspicious feelings he has about his wife and new employee (played by Matthew McConaughey). As he thinks out loud this introspection takes a turn for the worse, and before long his words sound increasingly jealous and paranoid. Finally, his wife played by Rene Russo interjects, "You are in your own head again. What'd I tell you about that? Stay out of there, its a bad neighborhood!"

I love that quote because it illustrates an important point. Namely, that a mental compulsion **is** a bad neighborhood. Yet we go there, again and again, like gluttons for punishment. We are like junkies driving downtown to cop a fix, without any regard for our safety, or whether we will get caught and arrested. What could we possibly need so bad? What is it that takes hold of our brains and forces us to navigate through endless cycles of disturbing obsessive-compulsive behavior? What are we really after?

The answer, of course, is: **the feeling of certainty**. What makes the green grass, green? What makes a light switch, switched off? What makes a locked door, locked?

Cognitive Dissonance vs. Guilt

So far, I have distinguished the difference between a concern, a rumination, and an obsession. But what triggers a concern?

We all like to believe that we are consistent, and not irrational. So if things happen which could make us appear irrational, we change our beliefs to make them seem consistent again. (**Leon Festinger**) believed that cognitive dissonance is one of the main reasons why people change their beliefs: we don't like to seem foolish to anyone, not even ourselves (Hayes).

Earlier I told the story of 'Steve the mechanic,' and the cognitive dissonance he experienced when he began to realize that he missed the way his girlfriend would sometimes wait for him at his house to get home from work. On the one hand, he believed he was the kind of guy who did not sweat women. On the other hand, the very fact that he was concerned about the break up caused him to realize that maybe he was being a bit narrow-minded. Maybe this happened on an unconscious level. At any rate, he was not equipped to deal with the issue effectively enough to resolve the apparent guilt that he had about it.

Sigmund Freud believed that guilt results when our **id (it)** wishes and **ego (me)** wishes come into conflict with our **superego (over-me)** wishes. In other words, I want a piece of cake so I take it out of the refrigerator and eat a slice. But when my mother sees me doing this, she scolds me and takes the cake away, because it's not yet time to have it. Consequently, I feel guilty for wishing to eat the cake.

Orval Hobart Mowrer, the American behaviorist and the founder of **Integrity** groups, had a view of his own.

Mowrer saw things somewhat differently. First of all, the crucial source of anxiety for Mowrer was moral anxiety (guilt). Second, rather than guilt resulting from a conflict between superego wishes and other wishes, guilt for Mowrer was a result of actual misdeeds, or sins. People misbehave and as a result feel guilt. Psychopathology is a result of the person trying to repress this guilt.

Clearly, Steve was experiencing cognitive dissonance, but dissonant-thoughts-in-themselves rarely carry enough weight to make a real impact. It is only the emotions and the unresolved tension associated with them that give these cognitions their directional power.

Mowrer's concept of guilt represents the 'tough love' we sometimes all need to attribute to our lives if we are to grow and mature. In the case of Steve, he may have left his girlfriend's house in a rage. Perhaps he became irrationally angry at her and yelled as he left the house, and this conflicts with his view of himself that he is a cool character that is always smooth with women. According to Mowrer, it would do Steve some good to experience this feeling of guilt and the resulting struggle, in order to become more flexible in how he handles relationships.

When we are caught-in-the-act of doing something inconsistent with our views of ourselves, dissonance can quickly

turn into shame. It is precisely this caught-red-handed kind of phenomenon that prompted Jean-Paul Sartre to famously declare "L'enfer,c'est les autres," which is translated as "Hell is other people."

Let us imagine that moved by jealousy, curiosity, or vice I have just glued my ear to the door and looked through a keyhole....I am my acts and hence they carry in themselves their whole justification...No transcending view comes to confer upon my acts the character of a given on which a judgment can be brought to bear.

Sartre asks us to imagine that we are caught looking through a keyhole. At that very moment, we may be defined as a voyeur. On the contrary, we define ourselves as a whole, that is greater than the sum of this one part. Furthermore, to ourselves, we are a series of these transcending, self-conscious impressions, that cannot be pinned down solely by this narrow definition. However, to experience the critique of **the other** is to realize that from now on this is how we may be summed-up by this person. The other steals our world for a brief moment and we are forced to see ourselves as being devoid of moral character.

Shame is the fear of what others will think when they find out what has happened to us. Guilt is how we **feel** about ourselves when we realize that we have violated our own standards of right and wrong. When we forgive, sometimes we have acted as an offender as we lash out at the other person. Sometimes we act so insensitively toward the other that we are left with feelings of guilt because we behaved wrongly (Enright).

So here, we have several different viewpoints of ‘internal conflict’ to entertain. When we take all of these ideas into account

what we have is a slight differentiation between **cognitive dissonance**, **guilt**, and **shame**. For the most part, we can say that inconsistent cognitions stir up inconsistent feelings (guilt), which lead to a feeling of shame (fear of the consequences).

In his book, "**Forgiveness is a choice**" (2001) Robert D. Enright PhD distinguishes between false guilt and real guilt. He says that "most people can endure only a few seconds of real guilt."

The pain and humiliation of realizing that we have really hurt another person is often so **overwhelming** that we try to throw off the pain by blaming someone else....False guilt is often a reaction to anger toward someone we need or love. We are hurt and angry when a person we love hurts us, but we are also afraid that our anger will provoke additional injury. We are afraid of our anger, so we turn our anger on ourselves and feel guilty. This false guilt may seem easier to deal with at the time than real guilt.

Anyone with OCD can tell you that experiencing **false guilt** may at times seem like the ideal solution to avoiding pain, but **the distorted and compulsive features that grow from it** are anything but painless.

Neurosis is always a substitute for legitimate suffering - Carl Jung

I believe there are two reasons why we retreat inward to avoid feeling **real guilt**. The first stems from the belief that ‘we are to blame’ for the random tragedies and quirks of nature. Often, we err and make many mistakes due to our inherent nervousness, and as a result, **we attribute our failures and the failures of those we care about** to this **perceived** defect. We often take on more responsibility than is needed, to right these wrongs. Frequently, we are overburdened and self-deprecating.

Also, because of the amount of anxiety - those of us with OCD have - we are more prone to act on our beliefs than most people. We want to make our lives and the lives of others a better place. Hence, we produce more constructive, and destructive solutions to problems, than the average person. But even though we may have thirty to forty percent more energy than the average person, we use more of that available energy. We become trapped within a distorted sense of inflated responsibility and become puppets of our micro-managed agenda.

Many patients experience an inflated sense of responsibility - even for events over which they have no control....Most examples of compulsive checking are attempts to prevent a misfortune, however obscure. The person strives for certainty that no harm will occur to others because of his negligence or supposedly poor memory.

- De Silva and Rachman

Second, we fail to grow out of this pattern because at times, it has worked for us in the past. Even though the guilt and inflated responsibilities are irrational, they give us a feeling of power, or omnipotence. We like this, because just as we like the power that we feel when we are able to condense, organize, and rationalize ourselves tightly and neatly - we sometimes enjoy exercising this kind of power over others. Others may become an extension of ourselves (narcissism).

The truth is we cannot own up to problems that are not ours and that we have no control over. Furthermore, we cannot organize the world and the people in it - contain it in a box - and put it neatly on a shelf every evening before we go to sleep. This is because we are not supermen and women; we cannot save the world. It is important to know where we end and other people

begin. Obviously, this is a moral balance that takes a lot of trial and error.

Chapter 3 - Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies vs. Defense mechanisms

Bettelheim (1982) pointed out that the English translators of Freud had distorted his theory in their translations, and later writers have perpetuated these errors. For example, Freud did not talk of the mind or psyche, but rather of the soul. He did not discuss instincts, but rather drives. He did not define the three parts of the mind-ego, id, superego—but rather the "me," the "it," and the "over-me." Giving the concepts Latin names gave them implications which the words in the original German did not have....Despite these criticisms, most modern presentations of Freud continue to use the terms first chosen by the translators, which perpetuates the false implications of these words (Lester, 1995)

I decided to open up this section with this reference because as I had stated before, my goal is to have the most accurate map I can. When I first heard him present this information about Freud in his personality class I literally, was stunned. Because anybody who studies psychology knows that class after class, and lecture after lecture, Freud is going to be discussed (Freud, Freud, Freud). To make matters worse, it is an inaccurate translation of Freud that we are stuck with over and over again. Lester's insight, confirmed my suspicion that the word "id" made **no** sense at all. And indeed, it is inaccurate - so why continue to use it?

However, the term ego and superego do have a certain appeal and unfortunately, they are the terms that everyone understands - so I will use these terms as I am summarizing (and quoting references), but I absolutely refuse to use the word id!

Newborns are governed by the **id**, which seeks immediate satisfaction under the pleasure principle. When gratification is delayed, as it is when infants have to wait to be fed, they begin to see themselves as separate from the outside world. The **ego**, which represents reason, develops gradually during the first year or so of life and operates under the reality principle. The ego's aim is to find realistic ways to gratify the id that are acceptable to the superego, which develops at about age 5 or 6. The superego includes the conscience and incorporates socially approved "shoulds" and "should nots" into the child's own value system. The **superego** is highly demanding; if its standards are not met, a child may feel guilty and anxious. The ego mediates between the id and superego (Papalia,).

So there it is, in black and white - straight from a college text book. From these references we can begin to paint an accurate picture of the underlying structure behind psychoanalysis. This is necessary in order to distinguish between what a defense mechanism is and what a cognitive strategy is.

A **cognitive strategy** is an attempt at balancing or suspending a concern until a more appropriate time, when we will be able to probe deeper into what the underlying cause may be. At no time, will I ever suggest that ignoring real issues will make them go away, it will not. Generally, the shorter the time frame you have to analyze, the greater your anxiety is going to be.

In order to understand what a cognitive strategy is, we must first explore the meaning and use of **defense mechanisms**.

Because of the demands of the superego and those of society, along with the possible inaccessibility of an instinctual object, the energy of a particular instinct might have to be directed in an alternative direction when it could not be directly satisfied. Consequently, a process called **displacement** resulted....When a displacement took the form of a higher cultural activity, the displacement was called a **sublimation**..... Artistic, musical, or literary expressions might actually be displaced expressions of more basic desires. Freud considered displacement to be a product of what he called, "**the death drive.**" Furthermore, he said that 'the death drive' carried with it the theme of hatred and destruction as its expression (Lundin, 1996).

Indeed, displacement can have an ugly face. For example, say I am at work and my boss yells at me. It angers me but I have to continue on. I cannot wear an angry face all day long everywhere I go throughout the office. Eventually, I have to just get past it and continue on with my responsibilities.

Freud talked about how we sometimes repress feelings of anger. In this case, even though I decide to 'ignore it' and continue on with my day, this subverted anger may become transformed into another state temporarily but its true form may re-surface in another situation later. Hence, it may still be there lingering in my unconscious, because it is only temporarily forgotten or repressed. Perhaps I come home to find that my dog has pooped all over the floor. Although, usually I am a pretty understanding person about this sort of thing, on this particular occasion, I give him a swift kick in the ass. This is arguably, the rage (that I had earlier repressed, ignored, and forgot) manifesting itself in the present. Unfortunately, the dog becomes the unwitting recipient of this displacement. In this respect, displacement is similar to the defense mechanism of **repression**. In fact, at times, they go hand-in-hand.

As insightful and truth-provoking as defense mechanisms are, they are only good when we have time to reflect on them; when we can sit down and plug them into our outmoded maps. Although they provide a fascinating depiction of how we have mistakenly diverted our energy, in the past, it is only after we have reflected on things we have done (and the outcome of using such defense mechanisms) then, and only then, can we be more conscious of them in the future.

In the end, we must develop our own system of morals and test them accordingly. We can form a strategy, test it, and later take out our defense mechanism screwdrivers and screw the loose screws back in.

Whenever we displace or sublimate anything, an unconscious diversion of anger (or other strong emotion) is always possible. However, we can become just as inadvertently destructive by **not** choosing to divert certain energies elsewhere, during certain situations (like in the work example). By not replacing unsatisfied desires and moving on to other tasks, we can stultify our growth and development.

Walter Toman introduced this concept as the **rate of cathexis** (the rate of psychological functioning). We all form certain desires throughout our lives and when these desires are deprived, we discern ways of substituting them with other desires. Moreover, as Toman explains each person varies in the rate that he can do this. The faster we replace ungratified desires, the more efficient our rate of functioning will be.

Lets say that I am at the soda machine and want a coca-cola, but it is sold out. However, I want a sprite almost as much. The sprite becomes my derivative desire. The point is I was thirsty, and now I have a drink, so all is well. Conversely, if I become stubborn and disgruntled and refuse to make a second choice, I will walk away thirsty (and much more disappointed than if I would have chosen something else). This is why indecisiveness is considered to be a symptom of depression.

So what is cathexis? Cathexis is defined as the investment of

mental or emotional energy in a person, object, or idea. Specifically, it is the process of investment in which we learn to appreciate, and incorporate new desires. Look at this idea of forming derivative desires as a strategy for coping with anxiety.

On the contrary, we must use defense mechanisms as the powerful tools of reflection that they are. They can help us to discern how we have reacted to anxiety **in the past**. The more we reflect on them and understand them, the more conscious we will become of them in the future. This is the whole point of psychoanalysis.

Through digging up these unconscious tendencies we hope to be more conscious about our choices in the future. Psychoanalysis is nothing but a series of deep reflections that involve re-living past events so as to determine their meaning for us in the present. Once we begin to understand these concepts we are going to have an increased insight as to how to react to anxiety **in the future**.

As the Rolling Stones so adequately put it, "You can't always get what you want." But if you strive for something else that you want just as much or almost as much, sometimes you can even wind up getting both in the end.

Let's say you have tripped on yourself while walking into class on the first day of school and almost fell on someone's desk. No doubt, you look stupid. Maybe your desire to make a friend to have lunch with just went out the window for you. Maybe you feel you ruined your chance to make a good first impression. Don't let it get you down and don't obsess. Instead just become engaged in the lecture and class discussions. After all, you desire to do well in your class. Let this important desire take precedence, it will carry its own momentum. In the process you may inadvertently make a friend by attentiveness to the subject matter. Perhaps somebody will agree with a comment you make in class, and wants to tell you at lunch. Now two desires have been gratified! Don't waste your time in obsessive thought convincing yourself you are ok. You are ok! Suspend your disbelief, remind yourself that even though you will sometimes mess up in life, whenever you miss

gratifying one desire there is always something else that you can shoot for.

It does indeed suck - to give up an ideal you are emotionally invested in - but as I had mentioned earlier in this book when I alluded to Scott Peck, depression sucks also. Depression is a natural reaction to change; it is only unhealthy when we prolong the 'giving-up process.'

The pain of giving up is the pain of death, but death of the old is the birth of the new.... For us to develop a new and better idea, concept, theory or understanding means that an old idea, concept, theory or understanding must die. It is also clear that the farther one travels on the journey of life, the more births one will experience, and therefore the more deaths - the more joy and the more pain.

Sublimation (displacement serving a higher useful purpose) is, at its base, a healthy way of coping. I have always known this, but for a long time, I had only used it as a method of reflection. After looking back at a situation or a chain of events in my life - I would see how I had sublimated certain desires along the way – and how that has worked well for me, or not worked well for me. Eventually, I began to deliberately replace my desires as a tactic to not only get me out of sticky compulsive situations, but to continue to grow as an individual.

Suspension of disbelief

Stop trying to ignore your obsessions and mental compulsions! What happens whenever you try to ignore anything? You force yourself to notice it more! Rather, suspend these concerns, put them off until a more appropriate time (like you would put a virus in quarantine until you have a cure). This way you are not trying to convince yourself that you are being irrational

by rearranging words in your head while on the freeway in heavy traffic (or during grenade training). *Maybe you are* being irrational, and maybe realizing this works for you. Hence, you have ignored it already. But if something is nagging at you, and eating at your attention - and your ability to concentrate on your task, ignoring it has obviously become difficult. Do not invest any more energy in trying to prevent it. If it is an irrational concern, it will go away on its own accord if you continue to pay attention and focus in on what you are doing. On the other hand, maybe you do have some valid issues you need to look at about yourself. But know when it is appropriate. We will continue to talk about directing our energy outward.

'Suspension of disbelief' is an idea that was devised by the poet and aesthetic philosopher Samuel Taylor Coleridge to justify the infusion of fantasy or non-realistic elements within literature. It is used to signify an implicit agreement that takes place between the writer and his audience. The writer provides a resemblance of truth and the reader agrees to suspend disbelief for the sake of entertainment. This allows the reader to engage him or herself in the story being told with an open mind. Moreover, this expression has been extended to include the genre of film-making, plays, etc.

Suspension of disbelief is something we do all do, all the time. Every time we watch a movie or TV program, or read a book, we undoubtedly suspend disbelief in some way. Therefore, we are already practicing this to some extent.

If while channel surfing one day, you find yourself watching Star Trek, you may notice a really ugly looking Klingon (with a really distorted looking face and an angry looking nose). It is an unreal presentation of a fictional creature; one that is hard to believe at first. Here there are these Klingons with these krinkily, angry looking faces (distorted and ugly) and they come from some planet (wherever that planet is). And perhaps there are Vulcans and other aliens. You suspend your disbelief as to whether or not something like this could ever exist. Perhaps because you become interested in the story that is being told.

There are many other terms that I could have used to describe this concept. Edmund Husserl spoke of pure consciousness, pure phenomena, and the pure ego. Husserl explained that sometimes we must suspend our judgments about the true nature of reality in order to experience these pure states. Specifically, he described the practice of phenomenological reduction and the process of **bracketing**. Moreover, Gestalt Psychologists have used the idea of **bracketing** as well. Similarly, Scott Peck also talks about bracketing in his book "The Road less Traveled." George Kelly talked about the idea of **suspended sets of constructs**. Indeed, there may be many authors that have written about this concept. However, Suspension of disbelief, is for me, an easy and fun way to remember and apply this concept. More importantly, it does not sound as impersonal and as vague as the term construct or bracketing.

In his book "Brain Lock," Dr. Jeffrey Schwartz recommends waiting at least fifteen minutes before carrying out a compulsion, if you decide that you are going to.

The idea is to delay your response to an obsessive thought or to your urge to perform a compulsive behavior by letting some time elapse - preferably at least fifteen minutes - before you even consider acting on the thought....Then you must do another behavior - any pleasant, constructive behavior will do.

This is similar to what I have learned to do. During this fifteen minute delay (suspension of disbelief) I emotionally tag myself to either a derivative desire or to some of social interactions taking place around me.

I.Q. vs. Emotional Intelligence

Academic intelligence offers virtually no preparation for the turmoil - or opportunity life's vicissitudes bring. Yet even though a high IQ is no guarantee of prosperity, prestige, or happiness in life, our schools and our culture fixate on academic abilities, ignoring **emotional** intelligence, a set of traits - some might call it character - that also matters immensely for our personal destiny. Emotional life is a domain that, as surely as math or reading, can be handled with greater or lesser skill, and requires its unique set of competencies.

It is important to understand this point, because without this principle, no cognitive strategy will work for you - no matter how hard you try. It is impossible to get out of your head unless you direct your emotions outward and tag them to something in the environment.

Once you decide to not act on a compulsive urge right away - and decide to wait instead - this delaying of gratification generates tension. Then, as this potentially dangerous mind virus (compulsive urge) sits suspended on the fringe of your consciousness (in quarantine) this **unresolved** tension grows into anticipation.

The more I began to indulge in this unresolved tension, the more I began to recognize the feeling of this build-up; it's like an emotional nudge. In the back of my mind, my compulsive urge is still knocking on the door (it doesn't want to go away). But I allow this nudge to engage me in creative thinking. And the amazing thing is that the others around me **feel this tension**, and in response they want to share my experience in some way. It's because the tension/release banter that results from it is fun. This is what brings people closer, this is how people bond! It's not necessarily what I said, that they picked up on, it was the quality of the tension that I was sub-communicating. After all, everyone has

a certain amount of unresolved tension, all the time.

I am not suggesting that we should complain. Anyone can find someone to commiserate with. Rather, what I am talking about is that narrow, social channel of expression, that is intimately connected with the feeling of tension. When you can tap into it, it can be a powerful resource. In Gestalt therapy, this is known as **contact**.

Tension has its own directional power....What had previously been choked off, cast into the past, becomes reborn now through the currently available sensory and motor realities....Completion emerges through recognition, enhancement and continuing focus until motor discharge - available **only** in the present – finally releases the person from living in the dead past....any return to present experience is in itself a part of the antidote to neurosis.

Time and time again, the hardest thing for me has been to get out of my head, and focus in on who I am talking to and what I am doing. What I have found is that when I am able to do this, my **so-called** social fears, resolve themselves. I can only utilize my anxiety to the extent at which I am willing to give up my attachment to the outcome for what is happening in the moment. Gestalt Therapy seeks to re-integrate a person with his or her environment.

Contact is not just a togetherness or joining. It can only happen between separate beings, always requiring independence and always risking capture in the union. At the moment of union, one's fullest sense of his person is swept along into a new creation.... (**but also**)A special aspect of contactfulness comes from the possibility of being in contact with oneself.... because of the human ability to split oneself into the observer and the observed - Polster and Polster (1978).

There is no feeling that is more harmonious than being swept up in the natural rhythms of life and be able to enjoy that feeling with others while it happening.

At times, obsessional thought has drained me of my vitality, spontaneity, and enthusiasm. Most of all, it has severely impaired my relationships. For a long time after my diagnosis, my life was a long and complex replay of **I should have said that** and **I should of done that**. But at some point, I had to risk trusting people. I had to let my personality play itself out, and then deal with whatever resulted from it. Ultimately, this is how a moral system develops.

Letting go is the hardest thing we ever have to do. This is because there are a lot of hateful people out there, we meet them all the time. But there are also a lot of healthy, inspiring, charismatic people out there as well - who do not hold grudges and who **do not mistake the difference between dominance and delusions of grandeur**. However, if you are wearing a lense that is designed only to filter out the manipulative, controlling people in the world, then guess what? These are the only type of people you are ever going to find.

To this day (**the**) limbic structures do much or most of the brain's learning and remembering; the amygdala is the specialist for emotional matters. If the amygdala is severed from the rest of the brain, the result is a striking inability to gauge the emotional significance of events; this condition is sometimes called "affective blindness." Lacking emotional weight, encounters lose their hold.

Unfortunately, many people discount the idea of emotional intelligence because they mistaken it for weakness. For some, it carries with it some negative connotations (like Steve perhaps). Maybe it just sounds silly or reminds them of people they have known in the past who were push-overs, or manipulative. But as Goleman says it is a concept that is handled with greater of lesser skill. And in the end, it is a sign of strength and dominance, not timorousness.

A high IQ is no guarantee of success. Many people go out into their respective fields with an IQ that is higher than any of their peers. But if they cannot navigate themselves through their ups and downs, and develop relationships with others, they will never rise to the top of their professions. Indeed, there are IQ geniuses out there who were once serial killers! Death row is full of anti-social prodigies.

The paradox is that, while a concern with past and future is obviously central to psychological functioning, to behave as though one were indeed in the past or future, as many do, pollutes the lively possibilities of existence. Only in the present can the individual's sensory and motor systems function, and it is from the perspective of these functions that present experience can be palpable and lively.

Overstylistization vs. Aboutism

Once I began to make the transition from reflecting on my unconscious desires (psychoanalysis), to having a livelier presence in my relationships (gestalt psychology), I began to actually **feel** again, and was able to enjoy my relationships.

The discrimination required to gauge the presence-quality of any experience requires connoisseurship rather than a system of rules. Grammatical edicts which require people to speak only in the present tense may be interesting experiments for people who need this particular discipline, but to require this across the board is a great sacrifice of the range of human communication.
- Polster and Polster

While in college, I joined the Pi Kappa Phi fraternity. At the time, I had a livelier perspective about my life and decided that I really wanted to enjoy what was left of it (my fleeting youth in particular). Also, I felt that in order to silence the adolescent voices from my past I had to experience these issues again and get closure - similar to what Polster and Polster refer to as **Unfinished Business**. Here I had this map and was going to test it. However, what I did not realize was that I was about to emotionally overburden myself more than I would ever know.

I want to start by saying that I **do not** regret doing this. I wanted to study psychology and experience it first-hand; and that is what I did. Even though I had taken many psychology classes, I knew that in the end, my experiences of the subject matter were limited to the vicarious interpretations of my professors and the writers of the books they assigned me to read. What I wanted to do was generate my own experiences. Therefore, I knew that my world would have to become less constricted. I knew that I would

have to get out and meet people and test my map of reality.

I picked the largest fraternity on campus, in order to be part of the largest social network that I could. Some would consider this to be a foolish move, especially since I was doing so well in school. But at the time, I was not happy with my life.

One of the things I like about Pi Kappa Phi is that they inspire leadership. It is not just about partying. On the contrary, I had many new responsibilities once I joined, and many relationships that I had to develop and consider in my decision making processes. There is planning involved, activities, a philanthropy. Somebody has to step up and take care of these responsibilities. No fraternity wants to have a dead-beat brother.

Here I was reading thick books about social psychology and interpersonal relationships, yet I had no social events to attend during this period in my life, so I went for it, full-steam ahead.

I did in fact, fearlessly set out to test everything I had learned in college (and in life) up to that point. And I was not afraid to face rejection or fail miserably in the process. I knew that whatever pain I would feel would be absolutely necessary and that it was best to get it over with because it was probably inevitable anyway. And so at age 32, I interviewed with and was inducted into Pi Kappa Phi. The people I met within this 'Greek subculture' turned out to be some of the most interesting people that I have ever met in my life. I cannot begin to describe how incredible it was to stand in front of these 50 guys, and receive the standing ovation that I received on the day of the interview. Despite the fact that I had OCD and had experienced the difficulties that I had in life, they were moved by my courage and whole-heartedly welcomed me in.

Whenever a person attempts to live a more conscious life there are two pitfalls in particular, that will inevitably appear; and they literally blindsided me, due to several key emotional elements that I lacked at the time.

(Overstylization) mistakes a poetic moment or experience for a way of life, loses the pungency of relevant content and invites the stereotyped and cultist behavior of the imitator.... people are natively interested in much that stretches beyond the here and now; they will talk about....who should start as quarterback, a movie that turned them on, will the mayor be reelected. They may be merely attempts to make conversation, to distract from distrusted feelings, to show off one's knowledge, to have a ready-made engagement, to avoid fight, sex or confusion, and all the other maneuvers that make life safe but uninteresting. **(Aboutism)** insistence on staying in a closed-off world, bounded by the narrowly defined limits of personal experience, is only slightly less poisonous.

The more people you know and the more interactions you have with them, the less closed off and introspective you will be. You become part of a larger whole; one that is less **subjective** and more impersonal. Also, you become highly visible within your social circles, and your behavior is observed by a greater number of people than it was before.

On the contrary, people with OCD are perhaps, the most private people. We require more time to process information, due to an over-stimulation in the orbital cortex (Schwartz, 1996). This is the part of the brain that alerts us if there is something wrong. Regardless of the intense scrutiny that we apply to the objects and the things around us in our lives, there will always be a degree of **uncertainty** attached to the fear of danger.

The brains of people with OCD operate similar to a transmission that does not have shift-on-the-fly. Whereas most people can complete one thought and move onto the next with ease, we get stuck in first or second gear. As a result, a great deal of the subtle and spontaneous joys of life are lost in the shuffle.

This, for me, can be an extremely painful thing at times. In

fact, there is nothing more beautiful to me than being able to capture the spontaneity of life and the natural flow of things. This is because of all the excruciating compulsive moments I've had in my life (the skipping record syndrome). After a while, I had come to appreciate situations in which I have had no obsessive-compulsive difficulties at all, and could just experience the natural presentation of life.

So why is overstylization and aboutism important? What happens when we are spending long periods of time by ourselves? Were caught up in obsessive-compulsive thought more. There is nothing wrong with a person enjoying his alone time. However, in my case, I went from this constrictive aboutist-type world, to a completely other extreme; one where I was part of an immense social network. Meanwhile, I wanted to experience all of it! In response to my life of 'sensory deprivation,' I began to **oversensualize** my world.

At the time I was seeing a therapist and we had talked a lot about ADD. There were some doctors at the VA that had diagnosed me with it. I had taken Ritalin for a while and it worked well for me. Since the therapist had known me for several months, he basically agreed with these doctors. He felt that Adderall would be good for me (and my need for stimulation). He basically said that he knew a doctor in town that could get me squared away. He suggested to the doctor that I take the 8-hour extended release, so that I would be taking it more than once a day (and be up and down on it constantly). I have to say even now, that at the time his idea seemed to really make sense, given the current circumstances (because I take Ritalin now and it helps me tremendously). On the contrary, this was the worst thing I could have ever done (at this point in my life). Not only did it not help to fulfill my need for stimulation, it made it worse.

They call Adderall 'the study drug.' Students would pass it around campus all the time. It is especially useful to anyone who has a really long paper to write. After taking one of these I could

sit down for countless hours and just pour an incredible amount of creativity into a project. And my need to over stylize my life increased exponentially as a result. I was writing poetry whenever I had free time. I developed new speaking habits that included intense over descriptions and overlapping metaphors. I was posting poem after poem onto my college web log. I would be weaving these complex intellectual works of philosophy and morality into the streams of my poetic words for hours each day in order to capture the spontaneity and the stimulation it brought me. Talk about mistaking a poetic moment or experience for a way of life...

A person cannot be expected to be more in-tune with the present, and their world **until they discover how (by experiencing these pitfalls for themselves)**. I was definitely prone to extreme over stylization at the time. And it became worse as I built a tolerance to the drug. I was increasing the dose just as fast as my liver enzymes could break it down. At one point, my enzyme level skyrocketed and I was taking one (extended dose) after the other; going sixteen hours straight at times. Finally, the Adderall had triggered off a substance-induced psychosis, and it all just spun out of control at that point.

During college my desire to be squarely aligned with the present moment at all times (and escape the skipping OCD record), not only distorted the spontaneity and contact that I was seeking, it ultimately catapulted me back into isolation. This is perhaps, the most prominent paradox of the disorder.

This **oversymbolization** was an inadvertent deflection of the closed-off life that I had been living previously. I was very constricted, pinned down to the immediate obsessive-compulsive concerns of every waking hour. I sought to escape from this jail of **aboutism** by flooding myself with as much of this first-hand growth that I could. I wanted to achieve great things and overcome my OCD, I had been studying like crazy.

The supercharging effect of the Adderall triggered a mania which drove me further into denial. I had not yet accepted my

OCD as a part of who I was (and will always be). Also, I was trying to accomplish too much, too quickly, and racing against years of unconscious programming (the cognitive maze).

One day, I finally packed up and drove down to Key West, Florida (where else), where I ultimately ended up in a drug clinic. It was an absolutely horrible experience for me. It was only after taking a long break from college that I was able to once again regain my piece of mind and self-confidence. During this time, I met my wife and later went on to study automotive technology at UTI. I enjoyed working with engines and learning the physics involved with the internal-combustion-engine. It not only helped me to keep my mind busy, but it really gave me time to reflect on the life I was living previously.

It is literally, amazing that I had survived this experience. But what is just as amazing is the fact that I **had** to fail this miserably in order to learn some very important lessons.

Sub-communication

Throughout my life I had always believed in being direct with others. At times, I have been brutally honest. If I felt there was something a person needed to know about himself I would not hesitate to tell him directly and sometimes, even loudly. In turn, I had a tendency to take all my communications with people at face value. I would listen to their words and then draw intellectual conclusions as to their meaning. I went about managing my relationships in a very logical way. As a result, I expected to receive this kind of direct, logical communication in return. I thought it was polite to be direct (and not play games). But what I didn't realize is that there is a much more subtle and powerful communication that goes on between people that does not express

itself in words at all. I had never learned this in college because they don't teach this in college.

Words are only one element of communication; **there is no such thing as not communicating**. There may be no statement about personal relationships that is more true than this. And when I was finally able to understand it at a deep level, it changed my life. I could have stayed and finished college and still not have understood this. In fact, even having a PhD is no guarantee that a person will recognize and develop their ability to subcommunicate.

People can communicate different types of information at different levels of understanding. The communication process consists of more than the spoken or written language [...] Feedback plays a major role in the full communication process, and gesture clusters are an important feedback. They indicate from moment to moment and movement to movement exactly how individuals or groups are reacting nonverbally. If we subconsciously conceive of the gesture as unfriendly, without conscious control we bring about a belligerent reaction that degenerates into a vicious cycle of hostility.
-Nierenberg and Calero

Gerald Nierenberg and Henry H. Calero's "**How to read a person like a book**" was published in 1971. They gave seminars on how to read body language in order to help give others a glimpse at this underlying style of communication. In their book they talk about gestures, clusters of gestures, postures, congruency. There are things that people do **automatically** without their realizing it.

We all make certain gestures that denote our frustration, agreement, uptightness, openness.....

-When a person is running her hand through her hair...this is getting in her hair

-When someone has his hand on his neck...this topic is a pain in their neck

-When we have our arms crossed we may be turning inward to process information (and shielding ourselves in the process)

-A person may pull on their ear, if they don't want to hear it

-Sometimes we restrain ourselves from talking by grasping our arm, or pressing our finger against our lips to keep them shut
Etc, etc.

This book will open up a whole new world of communication for you. Because once you begin to notice these little non-verbal gestures, you can repair conversations that don't seem to be going well. And you can better predict whether or not someone is congruent with their words (or lying).

We are not always consciously aware of the message we are sending out to others. When you learn to recognize these automatic tendencies it can greatly improve your relationships.

Sub-communication applied to dating

The idea of sub-communication is alive and well today in the dating seminars of **David De Angelo** and **Tyler Durden**. Men, on a whole, tend to communicate in a rigid-logical-direct-type fashion. And this may serve them well within a certain scientific or technological sphere. But when they try to translate this (logical, direct, high IQ) success to their dating lives they fail miserably. And this is because their logical decision making and direct style of communication is working against them. As people,

we cannot logically choose who we will be attracted to. No matter how we may intentionally decide on a mate that we believe will be suitable for us, there is always an emotional awareness that takes on a life of its own. As David DeAngelo has often said, "**Attraction is not a choice.**"

These seminars have helped a lot of men to improve their relationships and become more conscious of the impressions they make with women. Moreover, it's turned them into better people. People who are now conscious of whether or not they are actually congruent with their beliefs. This is not a seminar where men sit around swapping pick-up-lines. DeAngelo helps these people to understand themselves on a deep-level, so they can discern what it is they want in life so they can become the strong leaders they need to be. He helps them develop their inner game (inner awareness). This is sub-communication in the 21st century.

Tyler Durden is the co-founder and the executive producer of **Real Social Dynamics (RSD)-www.realsocialdynamics.com**. He is currently writing his book, "Blueprint." His website offers a great deal of insight on the concept of sub-communication and how guys consistently screw-up with women.

The paradox of direct-communication

Sub-communication was the missing ingredient in my life for years. Once I began to understand this and utilize it, it became a watershed of personal growth for me. The first step was to change the direct (overly honest) ways I was communicating; not only with women, but with everyone. Previously, I was headed in the opposite direction. My constant approval seeking and direct overtures only served to isolate me from people.

Previously, in college, I was convinced that I had to be either completely logical and direct or be insanely over-descriptive. I had really struggled with this balance. It was sub-communication that brought this balance, on a silver platter. The whole poetry

stage I went through was just another form of **histrionics** that I was suffering at the time. In the end, the answer **was not** to create beautiful elegant sentences every time I spoke. All this did in-turn was become a formula of script making and pretending which only increased my compulsive behavior. By constantly fishing for a reaction from people all the time (seeking approval), I was attempting to live by their values rather than my own. Because I had not been aware of this style of communicating, I was not aware of how I pulled the carpet from under my feet every time I attempted to connect with people and be myself. It wasn't anything like actually being myself, at all.

Pacing vs. Conversational turn taking

We have all known people in our lives whom, on the surface, appear to be very intelligent (high IQ). Perhaps they know every answer to every question. Their grades are astonishing and they seem to naturally catch on to whatever information is presented, no matter how complex. But then later, as time goes by, gaps in their social skills begin to appear and a sense of arrogance seems to permeate everything they do.

I once saw a perfect example of this at UTI. This person - let us call him Jose - was ahead of almost everyone around him in terms of IQ. He not only seemed to have a naturally high IQ, he studied very hard on top of that and had the innate ability of applying everything he learned. In lab, he was very effective at getting things done and many people would often ask **him** what to do if they weren't sure.

Later, he applied for Mercedes but had to pass a written exam in order to receive an interview. And although he earned a high score on the exam, he eventually failed the personality test that was given to him **during** the interview. After talking with Jose, I discovered that ultimately, what he wanted to do was work on diesel engines. Of course I encouraged him to explore this derivative desire. Later, he found out that a different company was

training diesel technicians and the situation worked out just fine for him in the end.

Initially, I was shocked that Jose had failed the personality test. Mainly, because I felt the guy had a lot of personality. In fact, you could even say he had an infectious personality once someone was able to actually get him to open up socially. However, he was very aggressive with others. Often, he would harshly criticize and even yell at others. Not only would he snatch tools out of people's hands, or push them aside, he would publicly vilify them when he could. And this made Jose very hard to get along with. His IQ seemed to be more of a wall that kept him from getting along with people, than anything else. Socially, something was wrong.

Often when I get to know people that I have to work around daily, I begin to emulate them to some extent. I will often plug in their sayings and phrases into my conversations with them just to see how they react to their own criticism. At times, I even go as far as to emulate their tonality and facial expressions.

This idea was developed by Milton Erickson, and is known as "**Pacing**."

Pacing means meeting the other person where he or she is, reflecting what he or she knows or assumes to be true, or **matching some part of his or her ongoing experience** [...] The words, phrases, and images other people use give you important information about the inner worlds they inhabit. By pacing this aspect of their speech, you are telling them that you understand them and that they can trust you. - Jerry Richardson

One of the things that I have discovered about myself is that I have an innate ability to do this. In fact, sometimes I over do it. As a result, others may feel that I am making fun of them. And this is not always the case. But one of the things I had to learn is that there are times to pace and times not to. There are people you

can pace, and people you really shouldn't pace at all. Pacing is a great way to get out of your head and enjoy your relationships with others and learn how to appreciate them, at the same time. But some people **cannot** handle having their ego emulated.

This is what happened with Jose. During the time that I knew him we would hang out, drink beer, watch movies, and have in-depth conversations about philosophy and psychology. I shared my ideas about existentialists such as Kierkegaard, Sartre, and Nietzsche.

Not surprisingly, Jose **really** incorporated the ideas of Nietzsche into his personality. After our discussions, he even purchased some of his books online. He would often talk about Nietzsche's concept of the Übermensch or Overman with a hint of anger and aggression behind his words. Just before he left for his training in Pennsylvania he carved the word "Overman" on his wrist with a tattoo gun. Later, after he moved away, I stumbled onto his my space page one day, only to see the message "You want to be me! You want to be everything I am!"

Of course, I have no idea who this message was intended for. I can **guess** that it was directed towards me as a response to my emulations of his aggressive nature. This sort of overt aggression was typical of him and seemed to be consistent with the way he often interacted with others (so far all I know he feels this way about everybody). Obviously, I will never know who the message was intended for but one thing was clear: this was pacing gone wrong!

The truth is, I was the only person at school that was able to connect with Jose on some level (at first). As a result of my efforts others had a guide for how to interact with him and were able to be a part of our group. But even pacing him was difficult at times because he was always so angry, and he would often stand in the corner and stew when he couldn't get his way. People had a hard time with him. Nonetheless, I was able to find that diamond in the rough, and therefore, I could flesh out his personality and get him to think on a more **social** level, whether he liked it or not. This

was for my own and everyone else's benefit. No one wants to walk on eggshells all day.

Pacing can be an effective way of communicating with people but it carries with it several levels of moderation and attention to the person's temperament.

There are several reasons why my pacing Jose had derailed towards the end. First, and most importantly, I had **not** done it in moderation. Also, not only would I sarcastically imitate Jose in the presence of others but I occasionally did it with him not present. These imitative sarcastic interludes began to catch on to the others around me and they often began to imitate the imitations. Jose, was most likely offended by this. The point is that if you use it, your heart has to be in the right place. The idea is to meet the other person where he or she is at so you can adequately gauge how to effectively communicate with that person.

Another subtler and slightly differentiated version of pacing is what is known as **conversational turn-taking**. The idea stems from Harvey Sacks' work on conversation analysis.

Sack's analysis of both storytelling and telephone calls reveals the mutual monitoring of each other's turns which is basic to sequential organization of conversation....in hearing how what they have just said is heard, speakers discover from recipients' responses what they have taken to have intended to mean.

At times, without consciously realizing it, people may exercise too much control over their conversations with others. We have all known people like this. Even after they have made their point clear, they still continue to talk. In fact, they may automatically jump to the next point without even stopping to let you comment on the previous one.

Conversational turn taking is a skill learned early in life and

in fact, some people never develop it at all. When caught up in obsessive-compulsive activities, the fine arts of pacing and conversational turn-taking can sometimes get lost in the shuffle. But they are powerful tools that can be used to break the obsessive-compulsive trance we sometimes fall under. They can help us to get back to our present surroundings. By getting involved in the intricacies and inter-workings involved in conversation, we can inadvertently distract ourselves.

If you can **suspend disbelief** long enough, plug in your **derivative desire** (the one you have of not being caught up in your head during conversations), and let the emotional weight generated by your **contact** with others take hold through **conversational turn taking** and **pacing**, then you have just pulled the truck out of the ditch. At least, until the next obsession which may be just around the corner. But don't get discouraged. As you become adept at feeling the pain of uncertainty, and using that unresolved tension, you will begin to experience the natural rhythms and the pleasant, spontaneous, flowing conversations they produce.

When you pace another person, you are also doing some significant things to and for yourself. Pacing, done effectively, will take your attention off yourself.

It was important for me to understand the concept of conversational turn taking before learning the art of pacing. These concepts are very similar but if you don't understand one you may not understand the other. There is a subtle difference. And this is because there is a certain time frame or window of opportunity surrounding every conversation.

This time frame is dependent upon the specific situation. Be conscious of this, and the desire of the other person to want to take their turns in the conversation. If you have a short time frame, you are not going to have a lot of time to be really descriptive. Whereas with longer time frames you can be more specific and do

some story telling and relationship building. Be conscious of what the time frame is for a conversation, and the desire of the other person to take their turn. Don't use more words than your turn warrants or the person may turn a deaf ear. This is the art of it all. And it can serve as a fascinating distraction, if you let it.

Even though these methods have been effective for me, I still at times get tripped up by the urge to perform a covert compulsion in the middle of a conversation. This blip in the matrix is not nearly as bad as it used to be back when I was trying to **ignore** my compulsive urges; but it does manage to stun me long enough to miss something that a person has said. Sacks acknowledges that a need for 'repair' may sometimes arise in a conversation.

Speakers specifically....**place** almost all of their utterances...(To) provide an obvious explanation for why this was said now. Through such positioning, they can, if necessary introduce an utterance as 'off topic' (for instance, through saying, 'by the way'). In this way, they tie their talk to a previous turn precisely by showing that they appreciate that they are now going to talk about something different.

Do not continue pacing if you have missed a valuable link to what is currently being discussed. It may be uncomfortable at times, but you may have to interject a question or two into the conversation in order to listen effectively. Otherwise, it will become a phony rehearsal of agreement. Be sure to have your conversational turns in the proper sequence. But of course, don't obsess about it if that is not possible. There are always ways to get back on track with a conversational theme at a later time.

Your ability to take turns in a conversation and pace another while doing it will sub-communicate a message as well. This subcommunication can even more powerful than the words spoken.

Your ability to help direct your conversations in a meaningful, purposeful direction will communicate a lack of insecurity, which will unconsciously signal self-confidence (more than trying to be confident ever will). When you can banter with a person, no matter how authoritative or attractive they may be, you can begin to experience real satisfaction in your relationships. This satisfaction will begin to carry more weight than any of the illusions of certainty you could ever generate from compulsive behavior.

Chapter 4 - The Flow

The Stream Of Consciousness

William James defined continuity of thought as the **stream of consciousness**:

Within each personal consciousness, thought is sensibly continuous. . . . Even where there is a time-gap [as in sleep] the consciousness after it feels as if it belonged together with the consciousness before it, as another part of the same self. . . . Consciousness, then, does not appear to itself chopped up in bits. Such words as "chain" or "train" do not describe it fitly. . . . It is nothing jointed; it flows. A "river" or "stream" are the metaphors by which it is most naturally described. In talking of it hereafter, let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life- (James, 1890)

James understood that a continuity of consciousness was necessary for us to maintain a sense of personal identity. Otherwise, we would experience serious depersonalization every time we awoke in the morning. He believed that our habits of attention are directly suited to our private interests. Even though we may try to attend ourselves to a particular topic, our consciousness ultimately takes on a life of its own. We inadvertently welcome daydreams and altered states of awareness through an aversion of sensory deprivation. Furthermore, he believed that since our brains are constantly changing, when we see something a second time, it is different than before. Hence, the stream of consciousness.

James used the term “states of consciousness” (or “state of mind”) to refer to **the full momentary contents of consciousness**, including the central percept or thought as well as any emotional background and contents in **peripheral awareness**. - G. William Farthing

James asks the question, “Are we ever wholly unconscious?”

I once remarked to a therapist I saw for three years that when I am caught up in a mental compulsion, I feel as if I am trapped in a void-of-consciousness. She asked me what I meant by this. And I told her that when I am caught up in a cycle of thought, it is as though a slice of my consciousness is being spliced and replaced with an earlier scene, like an edited strip of film. Therefore, it seemed to me that a void in my consciousness inevitably results. This is because after the completion of a mental compulsion I often feel that I was not aware of what was going on around me for that brief period of time. Because of my inwardness and processing of information (splitting of consciousness) I am trying to be in two places at once. Here I am trying to mentally visualize whether or not the door was locked when I left while trying to attend myself to what is presently happening at the same time. As a result, there is a gap in my attention. I refer to this period of being ‘trapped inward’ as a ‘void’ (I am trapped in a void). She knew what I meant, and so it allowed me to cut out a lot of unnecessary conversation in the future by simply using this phrase.

This kind of memory gap is best explained with what is known as the **‘interference’ theory of forgetting**. When something distracts you while you are learning or experiencing something, and you don’t adequately process the information as a result, you can say that your forgetting took place as a result of ‘interference.’

Another theory of forgetting that is relative to OCD is the ‘trace decay theory.’ It is like a conveyor belt with a wheel turning each end. Picture the first box moving down the conveyor belt (one carrying a compulsive urge). But you don’t act on this urge.

Meanwhile, you are taking in more sensory information from your environment (more boxes are being added). Eventually, that first box falls off the end - compulsive urge gone (since you didn't act on the urge). Maybe you will even have a new compulsive urge make it's way down the conveyor belt. At any rate, this is an interesting way of putting 'memory and forgetting' into a greater perspective.

Once I begin to re-assert my primary awareness after a period of this kind of mental-compulsive-type-interference is over, I can always pick up where I left off. So, I do not consider myself to be wholly unconsciousness during a 'void.'

Similar in form to the '**stream of consciousness**' is the '**now ethos.**' 'The now' is not a static concept that concerns only one state, at one moment in time. Rather, it is always moving from one moment to another moment.

Nonsense in grammatical form sounds half rational; sense with grammatical sequence upset sounds nonsensical....There is about each word that psychic 'overtone' of feeling that it brings us nearer to a forefelt conclusion....Suffuse all the words of a sentence, as they pass, with these three fringes or haloes of relation, let the conclusion seem worth arriving at, and all will admit the sentence to be an expression of thoroughly continuous, unified, and rational thought. - William James

G. William Farthing's The Psychology Of Consciousness

A levels of consciousness model:

Reflective Consciousness:

- Self-awareness
- Introspection

-Consists of thoughts about one's own conscious experiences *per se*. In primary consciousness you are the **subject** who does the thinking, feeling, and acting in regard, mainly, to external objects and events. But in reflective consciousness your own conscious experiences - percepts, thoughts, feelings, and actions - are the **objects** of your thoughts.

Primary Consciousness:

- Inner speech
- Mental images
- Feelings
- Attended sensory percepts

-Is the direct experience of percepts and feelings, and thoughts and memories arising in direct response to them. It is all includes spontaneously arising memories, thoughts, and images, including dreams and daydreams.

Peripheral Awareness

- Stimuli vaguely aware
- info. in short-term memory

- Includes mental contents that are on the fringe of focal awareness. They can be brought into focal awareness almost instantaneously through either voluntary or involuntary (automatic)

attention-switching processes. Peripheral awareness is at the border between conscious and nonconscious mind.

Levels of nonconscious mind

- High
- Medium
- Low
- None

Events

Specifically, I define a **moment** as an event (or event-related potential). ERP's are measured using electroencephalography (EEG). An important feature of event-related potentials is their ability to measure brain responses to internal and external stimuli. An EEG can reflect thousands of simultaneous brain processes. So in order to see the response to a single stimulus or event, the experimenter must conduct one hundred or more trials, and average them together. As a result experimenters can get a glance at how long it takes for the brain to communicate and process information. This is only after the signals have been filtered and amplified.

The Term "event-related potentials" (ERP) is proposed to designate the general class of potentials that display stable time relationships to a definable reference event (Vaughn, 1969).

Consider a basic ERP experiment done by Stephen J. Luck where subjects viewed sequences consisting of 80 percent X's and 20 percent O's. They were told to press the corresponding buttons for each letter after seeing them flashed on a monitor. The EEG was recorded from a midline parietal electrode site. The rectangles produced by the amplification showed an 800ms time epoch following each stimulus.

The resulting averaged ERP waveforms consist of a sequence of positive and negative voltage deflections, which are called peaks, waves, or components....The sequence of ERP peaks reflect the flow of information through the brain
- Steven J. Luck

First, it is important to keep in mind that EEG experiments vary depending on who is conducting them. So if you decide to look at some EEG studies there is an important guide to interpreting them that you need to be aware of. Just like electricity is measured as flowing from positive to negative in the automobile industry yet negative to positive in the scientific community, so too can EEG experimenters differ in the upward negatives or upward positives plotting of voltage spikes. It is merely a matter of perspective (and we must take it with a grain of salt). However, these experiments can give us a rough estimate of normal and abnormal reaction times to stimulus.

What can experiments like these tell us about human consciousness and the flow of present awareness?

Suppose you are sitting at a traffic light and waiting to make a left turn. Then, after the light turns green you make your turn into the middle lane of a three-lane road. Let's say the response of turning left after seeing the light change to green is in-itself **one event**. Furthermore, as you are driving along - from the right side of the road - a car darts out of a store parking lot and onto the lane to your right. Essentially, that signifies the start of another **event**. The previous event of making a left has come to a close. Finally, let's say that a car from the lane speeds up into your lane to move ahead of you. Again, the previous event has come to a close and a new event has been triggered. Of course, events can overlap as well, if we haven't completed the thought associated with one before the onset of another one.

Subconscious programming takes over the moment your conscious mind is not paying attention. The conscious mind can....think forward and backward in time, while the subconscious mind is always operating in the present moment....Nature did not intend the presence of the dual mind to be our Achilles heal. If our subconscious mind were programmed with....healthy behaviors, we could be totally successful in our lives without ever being conscious.
- Bruce Lipton

This notion of responses to internal and external stimuli as an epoch or event is at the very least, a starting point for understanding how our thinking naturally flows from moment to moment.

This is noticeable in others as well as ourselves. You can play this game the next time you are in a doctor's waiting room and there are others in close proximity. When someone's name is called, and that someone gets up to follow the nurse, it will trigger an event in some of the people around you. Pick someone who is not reading a magazine or sending a text message but rather, is just sitting there, free-associating. Watch his or her eyes and you will see them shift in response to the onset of the event and then again at the conclusion of the event. This may be followed by the person re-adjusting themselves in the chair in order to feel more comfortable. Perhaps they let out a deep breath or a long sigh, and downshift their eyes as they once again begin to free associate.

In summary, an **event** is simply that time period in which we respond to a stimulus. It is a way of describing the underlying and overlapping flow of our natural reactions to the environment. If you really wanted to break down the meaning of 'moment' to its smallest 'consciously noticeable' measurements, this would be a good place to start. For years I have always wondered what this would be called. The word 'event' works as a good measuring stick for me.

Since the dawning of the Age of Genetics, we have been programmed to accept that we are subservient to the power of our genes. The world is filled with people who live in constant fear that, on some unsuspecting day, their genes are going to turn on them. Consider the masses of people who think they are ticking time bombs; they wait for cancer to explode in their lives as it exploded in the life of their mother or brother or sister or aunt or uncle.

Example # 3 The Rabbit

The fear of germs is a central feature of OCD. I have heard many stories about the cleaning frenzies of others; scrubbing kitchen floors and bathroom tiles with Ammonia, bleach, etc. Indeed, a fear of contamination is the driving force behind many of our compulsive activities. And with the use of cleaning products, many people can compulsively subdue this fear, at least temporarily. However, compulsive cleaning does not help me at all (my wife wishes it did). Interestingly, I once heard a nurse at Walter Reed comment, "For someone with OCD, you are one of messiest people I have ever met!"

The fact is: cleaning in-itself makes me nervous. I don't mean showering, straightening up my room, putting things away, folding clothes, etc. I mean cleaning agents. Although I shower at least once a day and will at times scrub my hands furiously with soap in order to remove germs, that is as far as I am willing to take it.

This is because of a special that I saw on TV a long time ago. It was a documentary about spray agents such as: deodorant, perfume, cologne, hair spray, bathroom scents, cleaning solutions, etc. The makers of this documentary were animal rights activists who wanted to expose the cruelty that goes into the testing of these kind of spray-bottle chemicals. In order to illustrate this, they showed several pictures animals who were used during the testing

Chapter 4 - Beliefs

process. Of course, some of the manufacturers had to test the chemicals several times on several animals before they were considered to be safe enough for humans. Consequently, these animal test subjects had suffered horribly during this development process. They showed some extremely graphic pictures of a rabbit's eyes rotting out and the sickly, purplish skin tone of his fur. It really had an effect on me at a deep level. To this day, I sometimes hold my breath either when I spray deodorant or have to walk through a room where someone else has sprayed chemicals. When my wife cleans the house, often I will open all of the windows and turn on the ceiling fans because just the scent of cleaning chemicals can set off a fear of contamination within me. And even though they freak me out, I can deal with them, for the most part.

Another fear of contamination that I have stems from my life here in Orlando, Florida. Florida does not require emissions testing (for automobiles). There are some old nasty cars being driven that have sickly emissions coming out of them. I often find myself being stuck behind one of these cars for long periods of time (while in heavy traffic). I may turn off my air conditioning, or close my air vents to avoid breathing in the chemicals. But one of the things I have begun to understand is that these small (minorthreat) kind of germs are probably more healthy than anything else in life. And that is because they prepare me for the bigger (major threat) germs.

I attribute part of my success of dealing with this to the biologist Bruce Lipton and his work with cloning. In his book "The Biology of Belief "(2005), Lipton writes about the work he has done with cells and what he found is genes aren't the actual determinants of inheritable disease. Basically, to paraphrase Lipton: **the nucleus is not the brain of the cell**. Rather, there is a much bigger picture. He talks about cell communities, the antennas of cells and how they use our windows of perceptions as their means of interpreting the environment.

Lipton did some crazy stuff with cells; like exposing them to

toxic agents in a petri dish. To his amazement, these cells thrived! It was the internal environment (complete with the person's belief system) that did these cells in. In these cases, the internal environments of these people were more poisonous than the supposed toxic agents that could destroy them. Cells follow the collective voice of the community. Cancer may be the result of cells trying to escape from the 'status quo' of their community in order to start their own.

Our beliefs are the determining factors in what triggers disease; genes are only a blue print. Our cells will realign themselves with the danger that we **ourselves** are determined to predict. In a sense, worrying about getting a disease may ultimately, cause the onset of a disease. Lack of forgiveness, fear, or hyper-vigilance, may all be conduits of this.

The diseases that are today's scourges - diabetes, heart disease, and cancer - short circuit a happy and healthy life. These diseases, however, are not the result of a single gene, but of complex interactions among multiple genes and environmental factors. What activates genes? The answer was elegantly spelled out in a **1990** in a paper entitled, "**Metaphor and the Role of Genes and Development**" by **H. F. Nijhout**. (**Nijhout 1990**)...." When a gene product is needed, a signal from its environment, not an emergent property of the gene itself, **activates expression** of that gene." In other words, when it comes to genetic control, "It's the environment, stupid."

I recommend this book to anyone who has a severe fear of contamination or disease. Let it challenge your thinking and open up some new neural pathways in your brain!

We need to be less constricted. We need to stop worrying ourselves into a self-fulfilling prophecy. And in the end, we need to just let our immune system do it's job. By being paranoid about the small germs (the ones we can digest and become stronger from) we are essentially setting ourselves up for the bigger ones.

The first thing they teach in psychology 101 is the nature vs. nurture argument and the interplay between biology and psychology. And no matter how many times you discuss these opposing viewpoints in class, this whole chicken and egg issue inevitably leads to the same conclusion: both play an equal part.

I once heard a clever anecdote on germs, given by George Carlin on his CD "Napalm and Silly Putty." Carlin talks about how the fear of germs has become a sickness in society and that it is this sickness in-itself that keeps people from strengthening their immune systems and living healthy lives. He talks about growing up in New York City and how he used to swim in the Hudson River. The Hudson River is historically known for being dirty, filthy, **un-swimable** water. Yet on extremely hot summer days, he and his friends would succumb to the urge to dive in and swim for hours at a time. Furthermore, he goes on to say that while

everyone was lecturing him and his friends about their swimming in the Hudson river, they had gotten polio and every thing else that was prominent back then. He gives a rather sarcastic chuckle and says that his immune system was as strong as iron, because of all of the times he swam in it.

When hearing Carlin's anecdote I had to chuckle myself because there is a simple yet eluding truth in it. There comes a point when we have to just let our immune system do it's job! It's there for a reason and it will not get stronger if we live in a sealedoff, germ-free world. Sometimes, I consciously have to remind myself of this.

Our beliefs are an important window to understanding our biology. However, as Lipton illustrates in his book, sometimes positive thinking can take a turn for the worst.

"People who "flunk" positive thinking become more debilitated because now they think their situation is hopeless," he said. The conscious mind is the creative one, the one that can conjure up "positive thoughts."The subconscious mind is strictly habitual; it will play the same behavioral responses to life's signals over and over again, much to our chagrin. When it comes to sheer neurological processing abilities, the subconscious mind is millions of times more powerful than the conscious mind. If the desires of the conscious mind conflict with the program in the subconscious mind, which "mind" do you think will win out?...Tensions become conscious willpower and sub consciousness programs can result in serious neurological disorders.

The trick is to not ignore your compulsive urges, because you are not going to defeat your unconscious/subconscious mind. You have to immerse yourself in the desired environment (practice the

desired behavior) enough for it to rub off on you. The only way to do that is to let your conscious behavior recreate the ‘healthy programming’ enough times through repeated practice (and I don’t mean mental compulsions). Only then will it eventually be triggered in the future. This is what makes the process of accepting OCD so important.

You can teach a child **not to** do something, but it is much more effective when you can tell him or her what the correct behavior is to replace it with. So too, you must not just tell yourself to ignore anything without knowing the alternative course of action that should replace the undesirable behavior. Otherwise, what is the point? Just knowing something is not a good idea, doesn’t help at all. Rather, let’s create ‘new unconscious habits.’

Memetics

The word **meme** was introduced by Oxford biologist Richard Dawkins, in his 1976 book, “the Selfish Gene.”

Dawkins gave several examples of memes as "tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation. If a scientist hears, or reads about, a good idea, he passes it on to his colleagues and students. He mentions it in his articles and his lectures. If the idea catches on, it can be said to propagate itself, spreading from brain to brain."

Example # 4 Spreading the disease

Over the course of my life I have had several hobbies and

have explored many interests. I used to spend hours a day painting with oils, filling canvas after canvas, until at one point, I had decorated my entire house. I took guitar lessons and taught myself how to read music. Also, I was interested in photography. I worked with glamour models, and attended workshops where I helped set up lights and backdrops for the photo shoots. Later, I took a color photography course in college where I learned how to develop both color and black-and-white film. I took private dancing lessons with an instructor who I danced with to hip hop, and salsa music. I worked at a gym and was trained on the different muscle groups and how to lift weights.

I have known people from many different cultural backgrounds and have explored a diverse array of interests. Because of this diversity, I have had a great deal of cognitive dissonance throughout my life. At times I have been involved in different social circles, at the same time; social circles that were radically different from each other. I sometimes wonder what would happen if I got all of the friends I have ever had under one roof at one time. Chances are, things would get ugly. My weightlifting friends might beat up my chess friends. My mechanic friends might pick on some of my artist friends. Furthermore, my headbanger friends might punch out some of my church friends. Things could get rough.

Perhaps there was a time in your life when you had experienced such a clashing of worlds. Maybe it worked out well for you and the others involved, maybe it didn’t.

I will often find myself in a situation where I decide to host a social event, and bring these diverse social circles together. And I have to constantly put out fires in order to maintain a social balance between them. The hard lesson that I have learned is that there are some personalities that just do not mix, no matter how good my intentions might be.

My most recent experience with this happened at UTI. Earlier I mentioned that pacing is a powerful and effective way to build rapport with others but it needs to be done in moderation and

in accordance within the person's range of respectability. This is especially the case when several people are involved.

Often in life, the best social groups are the ones that are comprised of people who are different enough to challenge each other but alike enough to recognize the each other's competent traits. Because we often need others to keep our own ego and the egos of others in check, a motley assortment of humor becomes a great equalizer. The more points of view that you have about a topic the more equipped you will be to debate it. In NLP, this is called **'the law of requisite variety.'**

If your client George has five ways of resisting your good idea and you have enough variety in your behavior to deal effectively with each resistant move he makes, you should be able to control the outcome of your interactions with George. In other words, if you can make one more move than George can, you have requisite variety with respect to George.

If there is a person around me who has a set of beliefs that will be useful in challenging another person's perceived dominance over a topic, I will allude to that person's viewpoint. If this third person is then drawn into the conversation I can then pace both of them, which in-turn will neutralize all three of us. Not only we will enjoy this banter of our challenging viewpoints, it will help us to efficiently work together (once we find that middle ground).

Clearly, the idea of requisite variety relates to the meme. An idea becomes a meme when it is replicated by others. Then, this meme takes off on a whole other course. When something you say that becomes a catch-phrase in the office, and people subtly begin to pace you and others with your catch-phrases, your ideas have turned into memes. They have become a subliminal (portable) power structure. Conversely, when you pace another person and flesh out their ideas by imitating their gestures and speaking habits, you are in a sense, replicating their ideas. Hence, their idea has become a meme. Memes can spread anywhere, whether it be at the

office, school, church, on the playground, etc. They can be seen in catch-phrases. Both pacing and memes can be used as a 'healthy virus' to settle disputes and coordinate events. Keith Henson calls memetics "**germ theory applied to ideas.**"

The essential skill of the leader....involves initiating and coordinating the efforts of a network of people. This is the talent seen in theater directors or producers, in military officers, and in the effective heads of organizations and units of all kinds. On the playground, this is the child who takes the lead in deciding what everyone will play, or becomes team captain....
(negotiating solutions, the talent of the mediator)people who have this ability excel in deal-making, in arbitrating or mediating disputes....these are the kids who settle arguments on the playing field - Daniel Goleman

Indeed, memes can be a healthy way of integrating ourselves with our environment. They can also help us to integrate other people with their environment, and each other.

However, there was a point when I began to take on too much responsibility for the outcome of the interplay between these kinds of diverse relationships. At one point (at UTI), I felt that I had the perfect group of personalities at school. We've all experienced this. We settle into clique, and we may shun others from being a part of our group. This serves to protect us from the larger, more uncertain outcomes we could suffer from daily, if we did not have such a social circle. Developing cliques like this can help to keep our social lives challenging and our enemies at bay. Most of all, it can help us to stay engaged with what we are doing, and create a fun atmosphere to work in everyday.

This perfect group, that I thought I was in, could no longer stay in sync. And my efforts to balance the unity between us became an **inflated sense of responsibility**. Here, we were all socially clicking and the days were flowing together nicely, school

was passing by quickly, and learning was fun when we had each other to joke around with. But eventually, the inevitable anger and distrust spiraled out of control. During the times I could see it unraveling, I put the blame on myself for not knowing the perfect thing to say. I turned my disappointment inward and began to question what I was doing all the time. *I shouldn't have said that because then it made "... feel this way.....if I would have said something more centered.....the situation would have balanced itself...I could have made their arguments cancel each other out, etc.*

Eventually, I became trapped in my head for long periods of time while I was in this group. There were long periods of silence and my internal conflicts began to sub-communicate themselves as well. I was transmitting my negative tension (my mental compulsion tension), on an unconscious frequency (through my lack of words and negative body language).

If anything I poisoned the unity further, rather than help preserve it. My attempts at humor and accord became distorted musings because I couldn't listen to what anyone was saying anymore (or focus on my work). Once again, I began to micromanage how I was coming across all the time. Consequently, I became isolated. Not surprisingly, the group fell apart in the coming weeks and everyone went their separate ways. But this was not my fault, nor was it my burden (my inflated sense of responsibility) to keep these conflicting personalities together.

A virus is more than a parasite, more than an infiltrator, more than an unchecked self-copier. A virus is all of these at the same time [...] A **mutation** is an error in copying. It produces a defective- or possibly improved in some sense - copy instead of an exact duplicate of the original. A virus can exist anywhere there is copying going on - Richard Brodie

To paraphrase Brodie, the concept of a virus can be understood within three separate categories: **biology, computer, and mind**. And he goes on to say that replications of the mind can be the most powerful of these; even more powerful than the replications of genes. Earlier I alluded to Bruce Lipton and the work he has done with cloning cells. Lipton reminds us that "when cells band together in creating multi-cellular communities, they follow the "collective voice" of the organism." Cells will sometimes break off and form their own communities. The relationship between beliefs and disease (or neurosis) becomes even more prominent when we consider this idea of the 'mind virus.'

Westphal (1872) described obsessions as **parasitic ideas** in an intact intellect that intrude into normal thought processes or ideation against the will. **Schneider (1930)** defined obsessions as "contents of consciousness which, when they occur, are accompanied by the experience of subjective compulsions, and which cannot be gotten rid of, though, on quiet reflection they are recognized as senseless."

Sometimes you can catch a good meme and sometimes you can catch a bad one. Consider the great many people throughout history who have joined cults, and fascist regimes. I was able to explore many harmful memes in my science and pseudoscience class. The truth is that when people hear about the research that I have done on horoscopes they may admittedly find it interesting.

But it does not have a long term effect in changing their preference for believing in horoscopes. This is because it has really caught on with some people. It serves some kind of purpose for them. In fact, this is most likely the reason why the celestial charts have not been updated, it would disrupt the whole system, entirely. Rather, we believe what we want to believe in the end. Just as some catch the meme of a cult, others may catch the more radical meme of driving a truck of explosives into a building for a radical cause. Nazi's caught the meme of Adolf Hitler. Interestingly, there are people who have caught the meme of the holocaust **deniers**.

Chapter 5 – Scrupulosity

Some people with obsessive-compulsive disorder are exceedingly scrupulous. They feel compelled to tell the truth, and do so repeatedly and in great detail, even when no one expresses any interest in their tales. They behave as if they have a hand on the Bible at all times....Scrupulosity is related to an inflated sense of responsibility. (De Silva and Rachman).

Example # 5 Fright Night

This story takes place in Edgewood, Maryland, in the fall of 1992, during the time that I was stationed at Aberdeen Proving Grounds for my advanced-individual-training in basic mechanics. One day I found a religious organization not too far from the base that organized weekend trips for the soldiers: to Washington, Philadelphia, and other nearby cities. They had a house with several beds, a large kitchen, and a recreation room. Usually, I was invited to stay the entire weekend. I enjoyed the opportunity for Christian fellowship and the soothing, safe environment it provided. It kept me out of trouble and it was therapeutic for me, especially since my OCD was beginning to spiral out of control at the time.

One weekend I hooked up with a girl (let us call her Rachel), and we became practically inseparable during my trip to Washington. One thing led to another and eventually we decided to meet at a hotel not too far from the base.

With a twelve-pack of beer chilling, and the TV turned to our favorite channel, we sat back and talked for a while, laughed, watched TV. Soon afterwards, things became more physical. But when the heavy petting started I began to feel extremely nervous. So I began to pray for God to relieve me of my nervousness, since this is how I was coping with my anxiety at the time. Whenever I

was obsessing or felt the urge to be overtly or covertly compulsive I would pray for God's help. However, a new problem was developing. When I would pray for relief of my symptoms I would sometimes get stuck in my head, during the process. As was the case in this particular circumstance.

No matter how much I tried, I could not satisfactorily bring the prayer to a close. I felt that I hadn't said the words clearly enough in my head and so I had to mentally re-say the closing words of the prayer over and over. During the process of excruciating repetition the original overtone of faith and authenticity had vanished (whatever authenticity I felt I was generating- or sincere humbleness I thought I had to display). So I began to mentally recite the entire prayer from the beginning in order to regain this because I felt that God would punish me if I didn't. I felt that the prayer would be a fake prayer if I could not duplicate the same authenticity and humbleness I felt the first time I mentally said it.

Unfortunately, this continued on for the rest of the night until we finally fell asleep. Every time things got hot and heavy I would turn my attention back to the TV and pretend that I was involved in the program we were watching. I could not have sex until I knew that I had squared things away with God (and definitely not during the repetitious prayer-process). As you can imagine, this was extremely frustrating and embarrassing and there was no way in the world that I could possibly explain it to Rachel. Fortunately, we met up the next weekend and things went much better but my anxiety only got worse and I wound up in the Walter Reed Army Medical Center shortly afterwards.

While I was an in-patient at Walter Reed, this kind of scrupulosity continued. Certain things began to have a scrupulous stigma attached to them which before never had any bearing on my decision making whatsoever. When I was in the cafeteria and had to choose a beverage to have with my lunch, I was afraid to drink Hawaiian Punch or have anything with red food-coloring in it. It looked like blood; drinking blood was a sin. Also, I insisted my

steaks and hamburgers be cooked thoroughly and not bloody.

Before being admitted into the hospital, whenever I was in church, I would have the impulse to shout out loud or verbally curse God. And I feared this impulse because I was afraid that I would act out on it. At the hospital, while people were talking to me I would have similar impulses (that maybe I would blurt out an obscenity). Sometimes I would envision horrific scenes in my head, and have the impulse to poke people's eyes out.

Furthermore, the numbers 6 and 13 became triggers of compulsive thought because they represented the devil. When washing my hands or performing any other compulsion it absolutely could not be done 6 times.

This is relative to how many other OCD people feel about having a **magic number (the amount of times a person feels he must carry out a compulsive ritual)**. My magic number was 4 or sometimes 5. If I had to do something a sixth time, I would then have to do it one additional time afterwards, so that the final number of times I carried out the compulsion would not land on 6. Also, the magic number could not be 3, because $3 \times 2 = 6$. I had to stay away from any multiples of 6. So I also had to avoid 12. And of course, 13 was not a safe number either. So if my compulsive repetitions got up as far as the letter 13, I had to do them one additional time.

In therapy, both my doctor and his supervisor both agreed that these were classic examples of scrupulosity, and they explained how and why this process of magical thinking often goes on in patients with OCD. My experience with Rachel was a good example of how my scrupulous fears took over, and filled me with **real guilt**.

As I had shown in the example of Dr. Enright earlier in this book, we generally cannot stand the feeling of real guilt for any longer than a couple of seconds. This is about the longest it can stay in our present awareness, before we turn away from it in some way. So what happens when something is out of our present awareness?

Where does it go? It becomes unconscious (one of many possible levels of non-consciousness).

Once we turn our attention away from real guilt it can quickly turn into **false guilt**. False guilt becomes a form of rationalization. Overt and covert compulsions are the secret operators of false guilt.

Indeed, I felt real guilt about the fact that I met Rachel at a Christian social and was attempting to have sex with her (out of wed-lock, no less). At some point, this real guilt became unconscious. Furthermore, I was depending on God to help me with my obsessive-compulsive symptoms. This is why I was in prayer as I was lying in that bed with Rachel. I suddenly became conflicted as to whether or not I deserved that help (considering the fact that most Christians would interpret my un-wed sexual relations with Rachel to be a sin). Interestingly, this type of thing had never bothered me before the onset of my OCD.

Perhaps the history of (**OCD**) can be traced to humanity's beginning....OCD encompasses many symptoms closely related to magic and religion.. Magic entails using means, having supernatural powers, or causing a supernatural being to produce or prevent a particular result (e.g. healing). Magic thinking and avoidance are two well-known mechanisms used in OCD and phobias. Religion (from the Latin word *religare*, to tie back) is a personal commitment to and serving a god. This commitment includes a belief system, a moral code to live by, and a degree of faith. Because reasoning cannot explain religious dogma, the believer uses faith to accept it.

It is almost as dangerous for those of us with OCD to experience real praise as it is for us to experience real guilt. Real praise in response to our moral choices can be just as poisonous. Earlier I mentioned that at Walter Reed I had violent images running through my head. And I was having the impulse to poke people's eyes out. My doctor had put an interesting spin on the whole situation. He felt that these impulses resulted from the unconscious recognition of praise that was I receiving from others in the hospital. There was a community of us that interacted with each other daily. We had meetings with the staff, attended classes with each other, and had recreation and TV time. These impulses seemed to flare up the most whenever my interactions with people were positive.

Whenever people showed any kind of rapport with me, I felt the urge to change this favorable opinion. Simply because in my head I was this messed up, sinful guy, who deserved God's punishment. So obviously, these people needed to have their eyes plucked out because they weren't seeing things accurately. My doctor was able to pick up on this once he realized how incredibly hard I was on myself. He and the other staff members thought highly of me and didn't understand where these negative self-attributions were coming from. So, they began to explore why I was seeing myself in such a tainted way, and predicted that these impulses would fade as I learned to trust others more; they were right. Not long after I left the hospital the impulses went away. And I have not had them since then; it has been 17 years.

Finally, years later I began to address the others issues of scrupulosity I had. Some of this success I contribute to my discover of philosophy, and the work of Soren Kierkegaard. Kierkegaard suffered from a profound scrupulosity. Most of all, he struggled with finding a moral code to live by.

An important fragment that Kierkegaard wrote when he was twenty-five is on the so-called “Great Earthquake”, when he came to an understanding about his father and the entire family. His father had cursed God due to his hardship and poverty as a shepherd child. Even though shortly later he was rescued from this life and became very prosperous, he felt that the blessings upon his family were an irony, and in fact God’s revenge. This despair was inherited by his children, five of whom died prematurely, including his wife. - D. Anthony Storm

Soren's father, Michael, had claimed that God would punish him by taking the lives his children while he was still alive. The interesting thing is that five of those seven children did die prematurely. Soren became fascinated with the story of Abraham and his willingness to sacrifice his son for God. He believed that his father may have sacrificed himself to save him and his brother Peter (this is how some scholars explain it). He referred to Abraham as the ‘Knight of faith.’

Kierkegaard discussed the movements involved in attaining faith: commitment, infinite resignation, and faith. First, **commitment:** Involves the decision to live in accordance with my beliefs, and not just have them. Second, **infinite resignation:** I must face the pain of renouncing a tangible (finite) relationship with God. I do this when I consider my life as a whole and strive for completion with him. Finally, there is **faith:** the belief that the impossible (finite relationship with God) will occur after the risk of infinite resignation. I must believe that what I have intentionally given up will eventually take place.

For Kierkegaard the problem of becoming subjective is the problem of establishing the proper relationship to Christianity. What, then, is the proper relationship, and how is it to be acquired?....According to Kierkegaard, the degree to which one is objectively secure in one's belief or relationship with God and Christianity is the degree to which one moves away from subjective truth or inwardness. For if God is an objective truth, then one's belief does not require any special relationship or commitment. - Nathan Oaklander

When Kierkegaard talked about the infinite resignation, he meant that we must give up God in the tangible, finite sense. In other words, I can't physically manipulate God and how he feels about me through a mental-compulsive ritual. I have to resign the desire to experience him in the physical tangible sense (that I was fixated on doing before) and believe that it is this – act of giving it up in itself - that is faith. Once I could re-align my beliefs with this new principle, it resolved my fear of not being authentic enough during prayer.

Kierkegaard talked about faith in God as being absurd, from an **objective** point of view. Rather, belief becomes much more plausible in the **subjective**. If you observe religious activities as a spectator (or as an outsider), they may be hard to fathom. To the casual observer, who requires this kind of objective truth, faith in God may indeed seem absurd. There are no objective, scientific truths to be found within the realm of subjectivity. Yet there are people who set out to scientifically prove God's existence. But God's existence and his miracles lose their meaning once you begin to do this. Suppose you were to tell Napoleon at one point during his reign, I am going to prove you exist! Moreover, imagine telling a historian that you are going to prove his existence. Surely, this would be both absurd and ironic, at the same time.

To paraphrase Kierkegaard, we essentially take a leap of faith when we decide to be a Christian. By allowing ourselves to be swept up in the paradoxes and challenges of faith that present themselves in the Bible - along the way - we find that we have become deeply committed. But this is a subjective journey that we take. As Oaklander put it:

People who do their utmost to forget that they are existing individuals are comic figures because reality has a way of forcing us to deal with ourselves as existents. For example, if I try to think of myself as a professor whose job it is to write this book, then I am thinking of myself as a *kind*, and yet at some point I must go through the anguish of making the decision to continue or not to continue to write this book. It is true that in science, philosophy, and our daily life we often think absent-mindedly because we forget what it means to be an individual. We have a natural tendency to think of ourselves as human beings in general, or as a specimen of certain kinds (for example, of our public or private roles), but **the philosopher who speculates on what it is to be an individual in general, or on what personal identity in general consists of, does not know what really matters.** We are existing individuals, each one for himself or herself. Each of us is not a human being in general, but I am myself and you are yourself.

I was raised a Jehovah's Witness. The Jehovah's Witnesses had several rules that had to be strictly adhered to by the members of the congregation. If these rules were broken it could result in dis-fellowship. Blood transfusions, owning a business, smoking cigarettes, no pledging allegiance to flag or celebrating birthdays and holidays, are just some of the many examples. My father was dis-fellowshipped for starting a business (talk about guilt). Imagine getting **kicked out of God's kingdom** for this. In a sense, he was told that God had condemned him.

It took me a while to shake-off this strong spiritual grip that the Jehovah's Witnesses had on my life. At times I wonder if I have ever been able to 'shake it off' completely. In my case, the teachings of the Jehovah's Witnesses took on a destructive theme in my life. **Due to my own spiritual ignorance**, I had perpetuated this misery. My prayer life had begun to suffer. No doubt, my relationship with God on the whole, has suffered. I do not blame them for this, and I certainly do not blame my father for this. I know, that like me, he just caught a very destructive meme, that has since permeated us both like a 'mind virus.'

Is belief in God a form of psychopathology?....The answer is sometimes yes....but the answer is sometimes no....it is essential to our spiritual growth for us to become scientists, who are skeptical of what we have been taught - that is, the common notions and assumptions of our culture....It is indeed possible for us to mature out of a belief in God....it is also possible to mature into a belief in God - Scott Peck

Kierkegaard was not blind to the paradox that self-action requires a certain 'objective maintenance.' He once said '**I must constantly be determined to hold fast to the objective uncertainty, so as to remain out of the ocean's deep, over seventy thousand fathoms of water, and still believe.**'

As I mentioned before, when Kierkegaard talked about the infinite resignation he meant that we must give up God in the tangible, finite sense. Specifically, I cannot physically manipulate God and how he feels about me through a mental-compulsive-praying-ritual. I have to resign the desire to experience him (the objective certainty of him, his validation) God in the physical, tangible sense. I had to give up this fixation because the act of giving this up is in-itself faith.

This idea says: in order to obtain God's validation I must give up the illusion of having it. Hence, by doing this I may ultimately achieve it.

Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find? -Proverbs 20:4

The need for God's validation is a powerful one. Especially to someone who has been raised a Christian and been told they were kicked out of God's kingdom. But there comes a point when **we** have to take responsibility for these kind of spiritual setbacks. The responsibility for spiritual growth, is an individual one. Whether our struggle is with the Jehovah's Witnesses, the catholic church, protestants, Baptists, whomever.

We have already seen that God 'gives grace to the humble,' but many misunderstand humility. **Humility is not putting yourself down or denying your strengths;** rather, it is being honest about your weaknesses. The more honest you are, the more of God's grace you get. You will also receive grace from others. Vulnerability is an endearing quality; we are naturally drawn to humble people. Pretentiousness repels but authenticity attracts, and vulnerability is the pathway to intimacy. **This is why God wants to use you weaknesses, not just your strengths.** If all people see are your strengths, they get discouraged and think, "Well, good for her, but I'll never be able to do that." But when they see God using you in spite of your weaknesses, it encourages them to think, "Maybe God can use me!" **Our strengths create competition, but our weaknesses create community.** -Rick Warren

To further illustrate how important it is to objectively maintain our faith I want to share an experience that took place while I was living in Denver, Colorado at the age of 20.

Before describing this experience I must touch on how, at the age of 19 (while living in Burlington, NJ), I once again had returned to the Kingdom Hall in hopes of achieving 'closure.' I thought the experience might help me to achieve a greater clarity and acceptance of their motives. But I came to believe that the witnesses were too isolated from reality to have any idea whether they were doing God's will or not. They often spoke of 'being in the truth.' Yet people who were not considered to be 'a witness' of this truth were thrust into the opposite (extreme) category of being 'worldly.' This could be shown in their refusal to let children 'pledge allegiance to the flag' in school or their extreme aversion to what Hegel once referred to as "the world spirit." This was subjectivity to the extreme! Ultimately (in their eyes), anyone 'not in the truth' is exempt from 'God's new heaven and new earth.'

They preach that they do not follow doctrines...but ironically... they teach from the 'watchtower' and the 'awake' which are well...doctrines. They shut out everyone or anything whose beliefs do not directly resemble the teachings of these documents. When you see people in public...they instantly feel compelled to ask you "Is she in the truth? ...Is he in the truth?"

I had matured out of a belief in these teachings. But it doesn't necessarily make me right and them wrong. Every religion has rules that they expect the congregation to adhere to. And as I said I don't blame them for the spiritual hurdles I had to overcome.

While in Denver, I had no longer desired to attend the Kingdom Hall. Yet I continued to have a personal relationship with God, and I did want some Christian fellowship so I sought to end this 'internal conflict' by praying to God and asking him to give me a sign. Again, I was looking for absolute certainty (or validation from God).

I do not think there is anything wrong with praying for God's guidance but sometimes asking for signs can be dangerous. In my case, I asked him to tell me 'directly' what the true religion was and to point me in the right direction. Should I return to the witnesses or attend another church? "Give me a sign."

The next morning I walked to the bus stop and took a seat on the bench in the waiting area. To my horror, I noticed a 'watchtower' magazine (a Jehovah's witness publication) sitting right next to me. I began to shake and my heart-rate accelerated. And so I started to walk towards the next bus stop down the street. Once I sat down on the bench, I noticed another Jehovah's Witness publication on the ground, that was covered up with dirt.

I later had a conversation with a guy at work who I had known to be a committed Christian and we had a conversation about 'asking God for signs' and the danger of doing this. He encouraged me to come with him and his wife, to their church. Here, I had an even more confusing dilemma (so what was the sign - the witnesses publications or this guy's suggestion to attend his church).

For the first time ever, I attended a different church. During the service, to my surprise, people began speaking-in-tongues (something the witnesses fervently objected). Consequently, I began to feel guilty for attending this service. Later, I called a brother from the Kingdom Hall who I had studied with before I left NJ, and told him what I had experienced and how unusual it was to me. This only served to reinforce my guilt, because I could not fathom being a Jehovah's Witness.

No doubt, my experience with Church and Christian fellowship has been a long and winding road. Perhaps you could even call it 'a spiritual rollercoaster.' Ultimately, I had continued to mature in my belief in God and my relationship with him. I am now attending a new church and although it is sometimes difficult for me to put aside past prejudices, I believe this humble process is what is required.

However, this path may not be for everybody. Some people may be more suited for a relationship with God that does not involve any one particular religion. This is a difficult concept for most people to grasp because for most of us, religion goes hand-in-hand with God. Therefore, most people assume that if you are not part of a religion then you are not adequately serving God. I am literally stunned to hear the confessions of people that swear up and down that their religion is the only true path to everlasting life.

Many people will not even acknowledge the possibility that people from religions other than theirs may be walking in the light. These causal connections are pretty strong with most people. And for the most part, I reject this view that there is only one true path to God. I also believe that some people may mature out of a belief in God but that this also may not be for everyone. Just as I do not believe in badgering a person into accepting God, so I do not believe in badgering a person to reject God. In fact, sometimes atheists are just as unappealing and annoying as they claim overzealous Christians to be. I believe no child should be forced to pray in school. However, I do not believe a child should be denied the right either (give them a prayer area, what's the big deal). Ironically, this even-tempered understanding angers many people from both sides of the issue.

In conclusion, I think it is definitely possible to have a relationship with God without belonging to a single religion. But it involves a commitment to prayer; every day. If you have no social fellowship with other Christians, a constant prayer-life becomes ever more important.

Ultimately, it is God that will decide whether or not your actions were right or wrong. God.....people.....there is a difference. I believe that people should be free to make their own decisions about God and spirituality without the pressure and interference of others.

It is better to be hated for what you are than to be loved for something you are not.

- Andre Gide

It's never too late to be who you might have been

- George Eliot

Chapter 6 - Cybernetics

Our tissues change as we live: the food we eat and the air we breathe become flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, and the momentary elements of our flesh and bone pass out of our body every day with our excreta. We are but whirlpools in a river of ever-flowing water. We are not stuff that abides but patterns that endure. - Norbert Weiner

Cybernetics is the study of how information flows from one media to the next. Furthermore it is "the entire field of control and communication theory, whether in the machine or in the animal." It seeks to understand how anything digital, mechanical, or biological, processes and reacts to information. Therefore, it also seeks to understand the ability of these various systems to change based upon the feedback it produces. The idea is that any system can maintain an internal balance against their environment using sets of data as a navigable space.

Recommended reading: Ian Jakes' "Theoretical Approaches to Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder."

Central to the cybernetic approach to behavior, Pitman points out its claim that the "organism constitutes a complex control system which attempts to control not its behavioral output...but rather its input or perception, through a negative feedback process."

The Cybernetics model of OCD is centered around the idea that obsessive-compulsive behavior is related to psychological tension. Roger Pitman derived this model from the (1903) work of Pierre Janet and his notion that OCD patients experience '**emotional incompleteness**', due to a lack of tension.' He believed the modern neuroscience of cybernetics would compliment Janet's efforts. Only Pitman believed that tension had

a negative effect whereas G. F. Reed and others (including me) believe it has a positive, directional power.

Janet rejected anxiety-centered explanations of OCD. He noted that the rate at which an individual can function corresponds to the amount of psychological tension he possesses. Without this tension, he will lose the richness of his conscious elements.

Janet includes OCD, among other conditions, in the category he terms psychasthenic illness. He divides this category into three stages....the first stage of the illness - the **psychasthenic** state - involves the patient's feeling that actions have been unsatisfactorily or incompletely performed.... incompleteness in "perceptions"derealisation and depersonalisation....indecision, amnesia, poor control of thoughts, and "emotional insufficiencies" (that is, an inability to experience emotions fully). The second stage of the illness - **forced agitations** - includes "mental phenomena" (for example, rumination and repetition)....The third and most advanced stage of the illness - **obsessions and compulsions** - usually involves forbidden thoughts or acts of a sacrilegious, violent or sexual nature.

Since Janet believed there were different levels of psychasthenic illness, he illustrated this by composing a hierarchy. The top end of the hierarchy represents those with no impairment (reality function or function of the real). The high end represents severe impairment.

Janet believed that without a sufficient amount of psychological tension, a person becomes "disinterested in mental activities." This impartial interpretation renders him incapable of dealing with real situations. Consequently, he is unable to **negotiate reality** and adjust to **novel circumstances** (level one activity). Furthermore, he contrasts this with a low level of integration (level-three activities).

Notwithstanding, Janet also believed that a level-one-aspect of the **psychasthenic state** included experiences of **derealization** and **depersonalization**. Here is where the differentiation between psychasthenia and OCD must begin.

DSM-IV-TR description of Depersonalization Disorder:
Individuals with this disorder have persistent or recurrent experiences of feeling detached from their own thoughts or body, as if they were an outside observer. Their reality testing remains intact during these experiences.

Clearly, people with OCD do not experience 'floating spells' where they are looking down on their bodies, or feel as if they are living in a dream; unless they have a co-morbid condition. In fact, the DSM does not list these symptoms as criteria for Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. This is because clinicians have found that derealization and depersonalization have nothing to do with OCD at all. For the most part they are right. But for some of us they do play at least a limited (subtle) role.

Earlier I mentioned how we sometimes split our consciousness in order to perform mental-compulsive rituals. This disrupts our self-perception and interferes with our processing of information. But this separation of consciousness is not unreal, nor is it an outer body experience. Unfortunately, we are trapped in our heads during the process!

Moreover, Janet's second stage - forced agitations - can also be categorized into separate diagnoses, such as: agoraphobia, panic disorder, social phobia, and generalized anxiety.

Throughout the book I have talked about the importance of diverting our energy outwards toward the environment, instead of withdrawing inward to perform mental-compulsive rituals.

The inability to complete high-level operations leads to the appearance of phenomena such as agitations, tics and anxiety, because (on Roger Pitman's translated account of Janet) the mental energy that would otherwise be used in the higher operations is diverted into psychological operations that are lower down in Janet's hierarchy.

Reed postulates that the person is unable to spontaneously categorize and integrate himself with the trivialities of his environment. This impairs the person's ability to function, and complete tasks.

The mere fact that I have presented the cybernetic model of OCD in this book is proof that I whole-heartedly agree with Reed. I believe that understanding the directional qualities of tension is an effective way of understanding Janet's approach, rather than a conclusion to the contrary (as many have suggested). I believe that a cybernetic model of OCD (that uses a model of tension and how it's related to emotional completeness) is the most accurate and the most useful to us.

Before, I talked about sub-communication. I mentioned the work that has been done by Tyler Durden and David DeAngelo in their seminars with single men.

The idea they are trying to convey is that you cannot logically convince a woman to feel attraction for you. "Attraction is not a choice," as David DeAngelo famously said. It is not a logical decision that a woman is making; it is an emotional decision that is driven by the 'unresolved tension' in the moment. Whenever you try to communicate something directly, through being logical, you immediately kill the attraction. As David D and

Tyler D often say: logical states of mind put the brakes on emotional states of mind, and emotional states of mind put the brakes on logical states of mind.

What is "sexual tension" or "chemistry"? Most guys think it's when two people are **physically** attracted to each other, and get more attracted as they talk. And because most men aren't young, tall, and handsome they don't even **entertain** the concept that they could enjoy creating and amplifying sexual tension with attractive women. Chemistry is a reference to a feeling...an emotion. Sexual tension is created by flirting, being suggestive, using humor....but you're not desperate....
Anticipation is a big part of this puzzle. - David DeAngelo
(Sexual Communication, 2005).

When DeAngelo talks about using tension to improve relationships, he essentially referring to the physical appeal that 'emotional completeness' brings. DeAngelo is talking about how emotions are translated through physical reactions, unresolved tension creates anticipation (two steps forward, one step back).

When we think of the concept of sexual tension we typically think of the experience we have when we are in the presence of a woman we are feeling attraction for, and she's feeling the same thing...and there's an interplay going on. Well, there's another **equally powerful** type of "Sexual Tension," and it's the type that's present whenever there is more than one person in a situation. If two men are in a room, there is always a level of tension...and it's related to sex. It usually has nothing to do with them being interested in each other in a sexual way...but **everything** to with which one is the more sexually dominant one.

If a man and a woman are in a room, there is always a level of tension as well...and this almost always has something to do with the possibility of them being together sexually...Life is one complex ongoing scene of politically complex sexual interactions... and it's up to you to gain an understanding of, comfort with, and eventually master **over** this aspect (DeAngelo, Power Sexuality, 2005).

Do you think we can achieve 'emotional completeness' once we realize how to properly master our psychological tensions?

Janet did not believe that an 'intrapsychic conflict' was the cause of obsessive-compulsive behavior. He believed that compulsive behavior ultimately stems from a lack of **volition** (willpower), rather than an intrapsychic conflict (cognitive dissonance, guilt).

Volitional acts can be either overt behaviors or further cognitive acts. Volitional cognitive acts can include such things as deciding what to attend to (for example, the text book rather than the TV), deciding what to imagine, deciding what to rehearse for memorization, and deciding what facts or experiences to retrieve from memory....Once the choice is made, there is a feeling that it could have been otherwise. Reflexive responses, such as withdrawing your hand from a hot flame do not involve any decision making. Thus, reflexive responses are not volitional acts, and they are not accompanied by a feeling of volition. -William Farthing

I disagree with Janet. Specifically, because I think it is the intrapsychic conflict that generates tension, not a lack of volition. In fact, volitional acts are the product of intrapsychic conflicts, not the cause. As the gestalt psychologists have pointed out, a person cannot be expected to be more in tune with the present (properly exercise volition) until he discovers how. If anything, this is the point behind Gestalt Psychology. You'll recall how before I described **aboutism** and **overstylization**, as being two of the major pitfalls that result from an experimentation with volition.

I am grateful to the psychology professor at Gloucester County College in Sewell, NJ the introduced me to the work of

Marshall McLuhan. Without McLuhan's work on media, much of what cybernetics has tried to do might not have seen consequential at all to me. The influence of McLuhan can be felt now more than ever. As humans we have grown passed the media age of the TV, to the computer (and internet). Hence, we prefer to have a greater manipulation over our media and communication systems. No doubt, this propensity will continue to progress.

If we err, we need correction time, which may consist of a normal or - in the case of OCD patients - a delayed response. Through cybernetics, a continuous attempt is made to equilibrate the internal milieu with the outside world (von Bertalanfly, 1968) using either a constant or a trend regulator. The latter usually manages disease....The major factor influencing the cybernetics of OCD is the **tension level**, which stimulates regulatory or compensatory mechanisms. We think the tension level in OCD **benefits symptom control** by distracting the patient from the **main obsessional core** (Yaryura, Tobia, Neziroglu).

Chapter 7 - Strategies, Pitfalls, Definitions, etc.

Neuro-Linguistic Programming

Neuro-Linguistic Programming has been traced back to three psychotherapists that were considered to be masters of the therapeutic interaction: Fritz Perlz, Virginia Satir, and Milton Erickson. The co-founders of NLP, Richard Bandler and linguist John Grinder, viewed many hours of audio and video of these therapists and noticed some important similarities among them. During this process they translated these similarities into what they considered to be crucial techniques for achieving personal growth and success.

Fritz Perlz is the founder of gestalt therapy. He is famously known for his aggressive style of confrontation. He demanded a strong degree of presence from his clients. At times, he was even contentious, in order to provoke them into re-experiencing their anger or guilt within the 'present context.' 'What are you feeling 'right now'?' he would often ask. And in fact, getting the patient to 'live in the now' was his underlying agenda. He wanted patients to achieve **completion** (or closure), from what he considered to be 'unfinished business' (emotional baggage).

It was Milton Erickson that developed the idea of pacing. Both Virginia Satir and Erickson developed the idea of **reframing**.

Words not only represent our experience, but, frequently they 'frame' our experience. Words frame our experience by bringing certain aspects of it into the foreground and leaving others in the background. Consider the connective words "but," "and," and "even though," for example. When we connect ideas or experiences together with these different words, they lead us to focus our attention on different aspects of those experiences.... This type of verbal framing and "re-framing" will occur regardless of the contents being expressed.
- Robert B. Dilts

To paraphrase Dilts, it is where we place the emphasis that matters. When you can see a situation through a different frame you are more strategic and hence, you will be more flexible (and convincing) in your communication with others. This is an especially important skill for those of us with OCD. Why?

Often, as I mentioned before, people can be very unforgiving. Especially, when you must perform a task amongst an entire team or group of people - that all have a personal stake in the outcome. An error in judgment could result in disastrous consequences. You may face harsh ridicule. You may turn inward, and feel that the tide has turned against you. If you don't know how to redirect this negativity into a more positive direction you could be stuck with several social labels you don't want or need. "Qui tacit consentire videtur": He who is silent is understood to consent.

The important thing to understand is that people are basically 'status' driven. Everyone at one point has been in a fish bowl and has had to experience the pain of others' vicarious awareness of their embarrassment. As Sartre said, "Hell is other people." This is what makes embarrassing situations embarrassing. But what you will be remembered for is how you dealt with this embarrassment. Deep down we all fear being in that fishbowl and

not knowing what to do. We constantly look for examples of what to do all the time, everywhere we go. The more successful examples we observe, the wiser we become. Every morsel of wisdom is like a gem. The more gems we have to put in our treasure chest the better. Being around people who respond well under pressure will help us to increase our social value. In the end, it is this esteem that we really cherish in ourselves and others. People who do not seek approval - or retreat into submissiveness - when they are under pressure, are the innovators of reframing.

Indexing the specifics has traditionally been called “**chunking down**” in NLP. We listen for abstractions as we listen to people talking and we then begin to ask questions that invite them to be more specific and precise about the details. This “chunks down” the generalizations and thereby gives us the structure of the meaning formula....This **tests the reality of the belief** (or meaning). - L. Michael Hall, Ph.D.

Often we get wrapped up in overt and covert compulsions. This ‘blip in the matrix’ can have an effect on others as well as ourselves. Especially, if others have a stake in the outcome that is directly connected to our performance. Sometimes it is more than obvious when a person is ‘not present.’

People can see the blank look on your face that results from revisualizing events and carrying out mental compulsions. When you err to the point that another’s grade, or work evaluation is effected, they may become angry. This is no time to retreat back into your head again. Rather, face this, head on. Let’s be honest, this is a consequence we often face. But it doesn’t make us bad people.

Hall referred to framing technique above as “Deframing.” Below I will list some of the framing examples he explores in his book “Mind lines,” to give you some more specific ideas:

Specificity or “Chunking” Down
Counter-Example Framing
First Outcome Framing
Outcome of Outcome Framing
Eternity Framing
Model of the World Framing
Criteria and Value Framing
Allness Framing
Have-to Framing
Identity Framing
Metaphoring and Storying Framing
Both/and Framing
Possibility and “As If” Framing
Systemic and Probability Framing
Decision Framing

A psychological “frame” refers to a general focus or direction that provides an overall guidance for thoughts and actions during an interaction. In this sense, frames relate to the cognitive **context** surrounding a particular event or experience. As the term implies, “frame” establishes the borders and constraints surrounding an interaction. Frames greatly influence the way that specific experiences and events are interpreted and responded to because of how they serve to ‘punctuate’ those experiences and direct attention....Some common “frames” in NLP include the “outcome” frame, the “as if” frame and the “feedback versus failure” frame. The basic emphasis of the **outcome frame**, for instance, is to establish and maintain focus on the goal or desired state....A problem frame leads to a focus on undesired symptoms and the search for their causes. In contrast, an outcome frame leads to a focus on desired outcomes and effects, and the resources required to attain them.
- Robert B. Dilts - Sleight of Mouth

It all comes down to having more points of view than the people who verbally attack us. What I am saying here, is that yea..we err, we may even err more in our communication than the average person. But that is our major malfunction and we accept that. It does not absolve the other people around us from **their** major malfunctions, does it? So what, sometimes we have a blip in the matrix, big deal. Maybe Harry scratches his butt when he talks. Maybe Sally has an abusive husband and so because of her 'men issues' she snaps whenever a man comes near her at work. Maybe Tom is a really smart guy but his conversational skills suck. He has no concept of conversational turn taking whatsoever, and no one can get a word in edgewise with him. The point is everyone has their faults. So don't put up with it. You are hard enough on yourself as it is. You already know this a problem. You bought this book, so you are obviously trying to deal with it!

These are all fun, insightful ways to turn people's negative energy into a valuable social experience for everyone involved. After all, these people are coming at you with a certain degree of aggressiveness. It is easier to re-direct that energy than to completely negate it, or reject it. Use the challenges people have already set in motion as vehicles of status and power. After a while, they may have to socially respect you even if they don't want to. But the point is, nobody is perfect. There is no reason you should feel miserable simply because someone desires it. When you don't let them steal your spirit, you have taken their most dangerous weapon away.

There are two traps that people fall into when they are forced to respond to hostility. Either they believe they must act aggressively and respond with rage, or they believe they must turn inward and become timid and submissive. What I am suggesting is that neither of these styles of responding is beneficial. Rather, find that assertiveness within yourself that will create a constructive environment for you to live. As a result, you will experience less hostility and have more enriched relationships in the process. Let

the tension escalate a little as you partake in some playful banter; everyone likes a challenge.

Aggressiveness
Assertiveness
Passiveness

Obsessive-Compulsive Personality Disorder

DSM-IV-TR Requires several of the following:

Suspiciousness
Excessive, poorly controlled anger or aggression
Isolation, lack of close friends or confidants, emotional coldness
Chronic sense of loneliness or emptiness
Odd or psychotic thinking or speech
Unusual perceptual experiences
Excessive anxiety
Excessive dependence or suggestibility
Persistent irresponsibility, impulsivity, or deceitfulness
Lack of remorse after having hurt, mistreated, or stolen from another
Intense and unstable interpersonal relationships
Frantic attempts to avoid real or imagine abandonment
Self-dramatization and exhibitionism
Exaggerated expression of emotions
Grandiose sense of entitlement or self-importance, arrogance
Lack of empathy
Persistent exploitation of others
Persistent sense of inferiority or inadequacy
Preoccupation with being criticized
Need for constant reassurance and support from others
Excessively rigid and stubborn
Perfectionism

This is about the broadest definition that I have ever seen. Nevertheless, I want you to take a good, long look at it and consider the ways in which you might be similar.

Most people who come to see a psychiatrist are suffering from what is called either a neurosis or a character disorder. Put most simply, these two conditions are disorders of responsibility, and as such they are opposite styles of relating to the world and its problems. The neurotic assumes too much responsibility; the person with a character disorder not enough. When neurotics are in conflict with the world they automatically assume that they are at fault. When those with character disorder are in conflict with the world they automatically assume that the world is at fault. -Scott Peck

This can be a guide for assessing our capacity for OCPD. In fact, I use this guide often. Once I began to apply this definition to my studies I could form a clearer picture of the criteria. I saw the need for a more specific approach to OCPD after an assignment I was given in my abnormal psychology class. The professor gave us a list of movies and asked us to write a paper on one of them. All of the movies had content which pertained to a diagnostic disorder. We each had to write about what disorders in particular, we recognized in the movie. I chose "Ordinary People."

I wrote the ten page on how I thought the son had PTHD (Timothy Hutton) and the mother had OCD (Mary Tyler Moore). When I was given back my graded paper I was expecting to see an "A" written on the top of the page, along with several comments as to how well the paper was written. This, however, was not the case. In fact, the grade I received was a C minus.

She explained that the mother had OCPD, not OCD. At the time, I could not see the difference. I knew that it was time for me to take a deeper look into the world of personality disorders.

Personality disorders are broadly defined as enduring patterns of inner experience and behavior that deviate markedly from the expectations of a individual's culture in the areas of cognition, affectivity, interpersonal functioning, and impulse control. More than 80 specific criteria are used to differentiate the 10 DSM-IVTR Personality disorders in these four areas....An individual may display symptoms from more than one personality disorder....Such overlap is a problem, because no personality disorder takes precedence over another in the DSM-IV-TR.

If a car crash just happened in your brain, don't feel bad. Because you may feel even worse once you consider the personal filters and distortions of the people handing out these diagnoses. Indeed, personality disorders are based on an arbitrary judgment. And this judgment relates directly to the capacity of the therapist to discern his or her false attributions about himself and you.

Of course this is always a concern; but it is perhaps, never as valid a consideration than it is with the assignment of personality disorders. This observation of **the fundamental attribution error** was contributed by Lee Ross, to denote the dispositional personality-based, explanations people make about the personality of others. Indeed, there are as many theories of personality as there are pants.

Even the speech patterns of neurotics and those with character disorders are different. The speech of the neurotic is notable for such expressions as "I ought to," "I should," and "I shouldn't," indicating the individual's self-image as an inferior man or woman, always falling short of the mark, always making the wrong choices. The speech of a person with a character disorder, however, relies heavily on "I can't," "I couldn't," "I have to," and "I had to," demonstrating a self-image of a being who has no power of choice, whose behavior is completely directed by external forces totally beyond his or her control....many individuals have both a neurosis and a character disorder....It is said that "neurotics make themselves miserable; those with character disorders make everyone else miserable. (Peck, p. 38)

The question is often one of responsibility. This can be observed over a period of time (with a psychologist), or by someone who sees the person often. The diagnosis of personality disorder is nothing but an 'arbitrary guess' if it is made within the span of five minutes. Peck describes how much easier it is to work with those who take responsibility for their false attributions.

"As might be imagined, neurotics, compared with character-disordered people, are easy to work with in psychotherapy because they assume responsibility for their difficulties and therefore see themselves as having problems. Those with character disorders are much more difficult, if not impossible, to work with because they don't see themselves as the source of their problems," he said.

Eventually, I had come to realize that my professor was right. In this particular case, OCPD was the proper diagnosis. And ultimately, it was the mother's refusal to take responsibility for her OCD that landed her in this category.

Some clinicians can be broad in their reasoning and blind of the intrapsychic conflicts that cause their biases. Let me just

briefly list several different biases one will find when researching the definition of the word: Bandwagon, effect, base rate fallacy, bias blind spot, choice-supportive bias, confirmation bias, congruence bias, conservatism bias, contras effect, distinction bias, endowment effect, experimenter's or expectation bias, extraordinarily bias, extreme aversion, focusing affect, framing, hyperbolic discounting, illusion of control, impact bias, information, irrational escalation, loss aversion, mere exposure effect, moral credential effect, neglect of probability, etc. This is only a small sample of what you will find if you go to wikipedia and type in cognitive bias.

The point is: take responsibility for what is going with you, or someone else will; and you might not like their conclusion. In the end, the ability to be honest with yourself, and to find the balance between what you are and are not responsible for, is a personal choice that you make.

Cognitive Strategies

Suspension of disbelief- What happens when you try to ignore anything? You force yourself to notice it more. Rather, suspend your immediate concerns, put them off until a more appropriate time (like you would put a virus in quarantine until you have a cure). This way you are not trying to convince yourself that you are being irrational by rearranging words in your head while on the freeway in heavy traffic! Maybe you have some valid issues that you need to look at about yourself. But know when it is appropriate. If later, you want to read large volumes of philosophical arguments on the nature of reality and what we can be sure we know - then go ahead! Right now, pay attention to your life.

Find your derivative desires- You can't always get what you want but if you strive for something else that you want just as much or almost as much, sometimes you can even wind up getting both in the end. Let's say you have tripped on yourself while walking into class on the first day of school and almost fell on someone's desk.

No doubt, you look stupid. Maybe your desire to make a friend to have lunch with just went out the window for you. Maybe you feel you ruined your chance to make a good first impression. Don't let it get you down and don't obsess. Instead just become engaged in the lecture and class discussions. After all, you desire to do well in your class. Let this more important desire take precedence, it will carry its own momentum. In the process you may inadvertently make a friend by attentiveness to the subject matter. Perhaps somebody will agree with a comment you made in class, and wants to tell you at lunch. Now two desires have been gratified! Don't waste your time in obsessive thought convincing yourself you are ok. You are ok! Suspend your disbelief, remind yourself that even though you will sometimes mess up in life, whenever you miss gratifying one desire there is always something else that you can shoot for five minutes later.

Contact- There are many people and things in your environment to cathex. Allow yourself to make contact with these emotional resources, they can pull you out of your obsessive-compulsive cycles, and help you to once again anchor your attention outwards. When you allow yourself to doubt, you allow yourself to feel. These feelings, no matter how painful they may be, should be consciously acknowledged in order for them to become a more positive energy. At some point, you have to risk emotional engagement with other people. You have to let go of your desire to control your anxiety long enough to form a connection, so that you can **allow** the natural momentum of that connection to take over. This connection will pull you out of your ruminations and obsessions. In Gestalt therapy, this is known as **contact**. This

requires a leap of trust, but only within the context of moderation.

Uncertainty and Practicing Imperfection Nobody is perfect; that is the plain and simple truth. Any pretense that we can and should do things perfectly constantly is nothing more than a detour in oblivion! The following passage appeared in the book, “The Boy Who Couldn’t Stop Washing,” by Judith Rapaport, M.D. (1989). This is the story of a parent describing the severity of his sixteen-year-old daughter’s obsessions:

“There have been some years that weren’t so bad. But now it’s the worst it has ever been. Right now it’s terrible, Alice says we can’t answer any questions right. She says we just confuse her.”....“her most recent question is “Is the sky blue?” (**For months she asked**) “are the leaves green?”....” She asks if her hair is blond or dirty blond or brown....She screamed, she just shouted, over and over, “What color is it?” The words her family said weren’t just words; they stirred up this feeling of having to have the words exactly right....And when Alice felt that way, nothing sounded right enough.

Practicing imperfection works a lot better when you are medicated, as it did eventually help Alice. But the point is a simple one. Learn to appreciate the random, haphazard, chaotic nature of life. It is a beautiful thing once you learn to see it. Perhaps this was the idea behind the scene in the movie “American Beauty,” when the two kids stared at the bag blowing around in the wind. At any rate, there is nothing more beautiful to me than seeing a towel haphazardly draped over a towel bar, a large speck of toothpaste on a bathroom mirror, or an ink blot covering up a writing mistake. I have an extreme appreciation for these things now. I once had a political science professor who would often tag a certain phrase to the end of his sentences all the time: “....but

nothing is absolute” he’d say. This was a good meme to catch! So true!

Overt Compulsion- Visible compulsive act

Covert Compulsion- Mental compulsion

Inflated sense of responsibility- Many people experience an inflated sense of responsibility - even for events over which they have no control....Most examples of compulsive checking are attempts to prevent a misfortune, however obscure. The person strives for certainty that no harm will occur to others because of his negligence or supposedly poor memory.

Scrupulosity- encompasses many symptoms closely related to magic and religion.. Magic entails using means, having supernatural powers, or causing a supernatural being to produce or prevent a particular result (e.g. healing). Magic thinking and avoidance are two well-known mechanisms used in OCD and phobias. Some people with obsessive-compulsive disorder are exceedingly scrupulous. They feel compelled to tell the truth, and do so repeatedly and in great detail, even when no one expresses any interest in their tales. They behave as if they have a hand on the Bible at all times....Scrupulosity is related to an inflated sense of responsibility.

Void- The period of time, during which we are involved in an overt or covert compulsive act. Due to our limited awareness from being withdrawn from our surroundings...there is a gap in memory..or pocket of time where our awareness is limited. (e.g. - We may be trapped in a mental compulsion while someone is talking to us and not remember much of what they had said by the time we are done).

Overstylization- This is an attempt to be more focused that fails because we are too emotionally involved with what a person is

saying. When we mistake a poetic moment or experience for a way of life we lose the relevance of a given context. By doing this we invite the stereotyped and cultist behavior of the imitator. People are natively interested in much that stretches beyond the here and now; they will talk about....off topic interests to a certain extent. But those of us with OCD sometimes tend to be overly wordy, direct, and honest (radical honesty).

Aboutism- insistence on staying in a closed-off world, bounded by the narrowly defined limits of personalexperience, is only slightly less poisonous. Tunnel vision aimed at only the here and now with the intention of never thinking off topic at all is another way we attempt to be more focused and fail.

Sub-obsession- Sometimes we inadvertently create sub-obsessions while observing ourselves, and as a result we sidetrack ourselves. Once I begin to measure what my position is, I have changed it. If I am not really worried about this, then why do I keep thinking about it? And so, not only has my concern become an obsession but I now have a second obsession running parallel with the first.

Event- Specifically, I define a moment as an event (or event-related potential). Suppose you are sitting at a traffic light and waiting to make a left turn. Then, after the light turns green you make your turn into the middle lane of a three-lane road. Let's say the response of turning left after seeing the light change to green is in-itself one event. Furthermore, as you are driving along - from the right side of the road - a car darts out of a store parking lot and onto the lane to your right. Essentially, that signifies the start of another event. The previous event of making a left has come to a close.

Finally, let's say that a car from the lane speeds up into your lane to move ahead of you. Again, the previous event has come to a close and a new event has been triggered. Of course, events can

overlap as well, if we haven't completed the thought associated with one before the onset of another one.

I take a levels of consciousness approach...to OCD. Most of the ways I refer to it relate to what I consider to be mental or conscious states...

In conclusion

I hope my personal strategy guide has given you some ideas on how to start or improve your own. I recommend visiting a used book store. Get some books on abnormal psychology, personality, human development, etc. Research defense mechanisms like:

Rationalization
Denial
Intellectualization
Sublimation
Displacement
Reaction Formation
Retroflection
Deflection
Confluence

I recommend Freud, Adler, and Polster and Polster. Also see my list of recommend readings at the end of this book.

About the author

At the time of my OCD diagnosis in 92' I was severely crippled with anxiety. It flared up while I was in Army basic training, at Fort Dix, NJ. It took me six months to graduate from boot camp and by the time I reached advanced-individual-training, I was emotionally and psychologically fried.

Amazingly, I made it through 12 weeks of the 16 week wheel-vehicle-repair course, until one day my senior drill sergeant requested that we sit down and talk. He could tell something wasn't right and that I was becoming increasingly anxious. After we discussed some of the issues that I was having, he suggested that I talk to a psychologist. After meeting with a doctor on the neighboring base, I was then transported to Walter Reed Medical Center, where I spent the next six months in intensive psychotherapy.

I did not understand what anxiety was or what OCD was at the time. Even though I received the best possible care - at what is a very good hospital - it still took me years to make sense of what was happening to me. One disaster and eviction after another played out until I found myself living in a VA funded house in North Jersey, miserable and alone.

Finally, one day I knew that I had to do whatever it took to make sense of it all and get on with my life. I wanted to understand why, over the course of the last 6 years, everything had become so dark, filled with fear, and radically unmanageable. So, I decided to just start at the beginning. Courtesy of the VA, I had met a very caring and insightful therapist and saw her for a total of three years. I went to some used book stores in the area and bought every psychology textbook that I could find.

Eventually, I went to Gloucester County College to study psychology, where I was put on the Dean's list and inducted into the honor society. Afterwards, I transferred to Richard Stockton College of NJ where I had attended some fascinating classes in philosophy and psychology. Furthermore, I joined Pi Kappa Phi Fraternity in order to really explore my interests in social psychology from a first-person perspective.

Later, I took some time off from college, got interested in cars and before long graduated from Universal Technical Institute with a degree in Automotive Technology.

Now, I am studying at Columbia College in Orlando to complete my bachelors degree. At times, it has not been easy. There is no doubt, a great many people out there who will readily affirm this! But even though, I have had to suffer through many failures, I have grown from them and I have expanded my capacity for joy at the same time. I have never let my OCD stand in the way of my wanting to live life to the fullest.

So, do I believe that anxiety has been the driving force behind my determination and creativity? You bet! And I am thankful for that motivation. It was my desire to explore OCD and consciousness that pulled me out of the rut of 'shallow living,' and helped me to form 'new healthier habits.'

In a sense, this book is a **strategy guide**; a collection of all of my coping mechanisms, condensed into one book. I am not telling you directly to do any of this stuff. Nor am I trying to lecture, conjecture, or put myself on a pedestal. I am merely sharing what has worked for me. If you decide to try any of this and it works for you, I would love to hear about your success story. Feel free to visit my website www.derivative desire.com. At the very least I hope I have helped you to add a few new landmarks to your map. Hopefully one day I will be afforded the opportunity to put some of my ideas to good use, and really do some real scientific research. This is if anyone is ever crazy enough to actually trust me around medical equipment. I am just kidding of course. There is nothing I would like more than study OCD and consciousness professionally. Best of luck to you!

Flux - Recommended Readings

David Lester, *Theories Of Personality: A System's Approach* (Bristol, Pennsylvania: Taylor & Francis, 1995).

Alfred Korzybski, *Science and Sanity fifth edition* (Englewood, New Jersey, USA: Institute Of General Semantics, 1994).

L. Nathan Oaklander, *Existentialist Philosophy An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1992).

Richard Brodie, *Virus of the mind the new science of the meme* (Seattle: Integral Press, 1996).

Jerry Richardson, *The Magic Of Rapport* (Capitola, CA: Meta Publications, 2000).

Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (Broadway, New York, New York: Bantam Books, 1995).

Padmal De Silva, Stanley Rachman *Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder The Facts Third Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

M. Scott Peck, M.D., *The Road Less Traveled* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 2003).

Jose A. Yaryura-Tobias, M.D., F.A.C.P.M., Fugen A. Neziroglu, PH.D, A.B.B.P., A.B.P.P. *Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder Spectrum Pathogenesis, Diagnosis, and Treatment* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, Inc., 1997).

Robert D. Enright, Phd, *Forgiveness is a choice* (Washington, DC: APA Life Tolls American Psychological Association, 2001).

Diane E. Papalia, Sally Wendkos Olds, Ruth Duskin Feldman, *A child's world Infancy Through Adolescence Tenth Edition* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2006).

Jeffrey M. Schwartz, MD with Beverly Beyette, *Brain Lock* (New York, NY: Harper Collinsbooks, 1996).

Gerald Nierenberg and Henry H. Calero *How to read a person like a book* (New York, NY: Pocket Books, a division of Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1971).

Erving Polster, Ph.D. and Miriam Polster, Ph.D. *Gestalt Therapy Integrated* (New York: Vintage Books edition, 1974).

Dr. Nicky Hayes, *Teach Yourself: Psychology* (Chicago, IL: Contemporary Books, a Division of the McGraw Hill companies, 2003).

Gail Steketee, Ph.D., Teresa Pigott, M.D. *Obsessive Compulsive Disorder The latest assessment and treatment strategies* (Kansas City, MO: Compact Clinicals, 2006).

David Silverman, *Harvey Sacks Social Science & Conversation Analysis* (Cambridge CB2 1 UR, UK: Polity Press, Oxford OX 41JF: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1998).

Bruce H. Lipton, PH.D., *The Biology Of Belief* (New York, NY: Mountain of Love Productions, 2008).

Steven J. Luck, *An Introduction To The Event-Related Potential Technique* (Cambridge, Massachusetts Institute of technology, 2005).

B.R. Hergenhahn, *An Introduction to the History of Psychology fifth edition* (Toronto, Ontario: Wadsworth, a division of Thomson Learning, 2005).

Tim Gilles, *Automotive Service custom edition universal technical institute* (Clifton Park: Delmar Learning, 2004).

Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago, IL: The University Of Chicago Press, 1972).

G. William Farthing, *The Psychology of Consciousness* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992).

Judith Rapoport, M.D., *The Boy Who Couldn't Stop Washing* (New York, NY: Plume, 1990).

William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1918).

Ian Jakes, *Theoretical Approaches to Obsessive Compulsive Disorder* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Robert B. Dilts, *Sleight of Mouth* (Capitola, California: Meta Publications, 1999).

Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002).

David DeAngelo's Sexual Communication and Power Sexuality were referenced in this book. I highly recommend both of these publications, as well as interviews with dating gurus, where David D talks directly with Tyler Durden.